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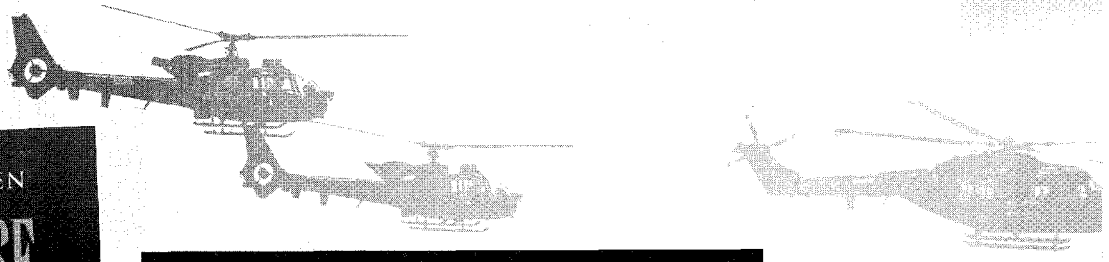

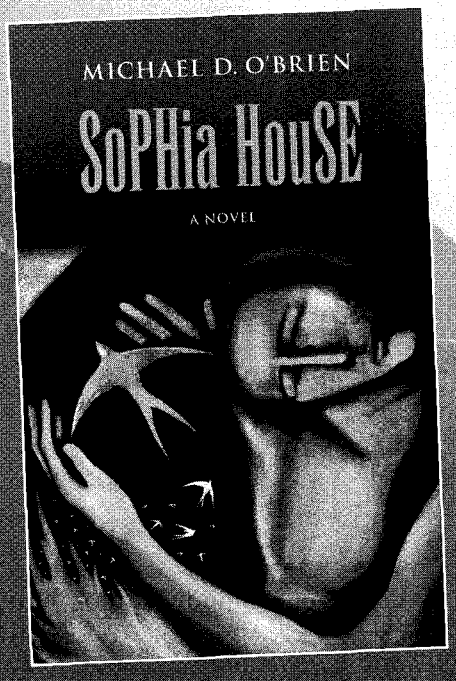

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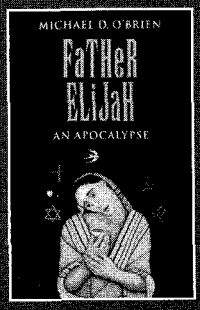

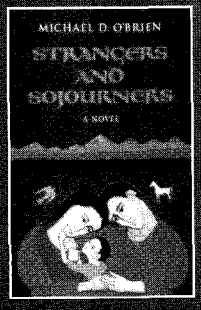

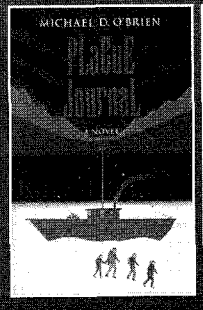

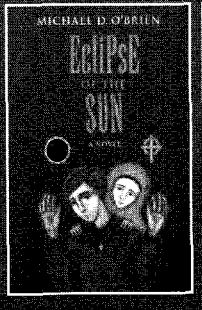

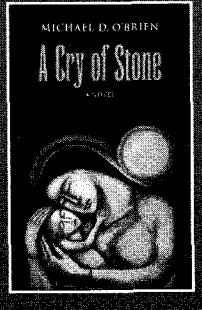

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Laughing Matters

I am gratified that much of my assessment of Kierkegaard's humor is confirmed by a critic as distinguished and rigorous as David B. Hart (see "The Laughter of the Philosophers," January).

In his critique, Mr. Hart has focused intently on a single sentence concerning the gauntlet that the book lays down, which is simple and explicit: "Bundle together any other ten philosophers who have made a major impact in the history of philosophy. I challenge any reader to assemble a selection of humor from all of them put together that is funnier than what you find in this volume of Kierkegaard." What I intended as a provocative metaphorical goad, Hart took literally as a definite and categorical challenge, which I welcome. Whether his candidate, J. G. Hamann, has indeed had a major impact on the history of philosophy, or whether he in fact is a philosopher, Hart himself debates. It is only when someone produces a book on the humor of Hamann (plus nine other philosophers) that by some form of common consent exceeds *The Humor of Kierkegaard* that the question of who is the funniest can begin to be settled. Meanwhile the gauntlet remains down.

Against Kierkegaard's light-hearted charge that latitudinarian Danish Christendom has become something like a "'Christian' whorehouse," Mr. Hart surprised me by going so far as to argue that indeed "there are 'Christian' whorehouses." This made me want to learn a lot more than I presently know. It is dubious that such Kierkegaardian analogies are more vitriolic than Mr. Hart's own favorite whimsical anecdote about Schopenhauer throwing an old lady down the stairs. Which is funnier is a question of aesthetic assessment about which reasonable persons can disagree.

I have made entirely clear my sole criterion for making these selections: Are they funny to me? What other criterion would have been possible to an anthologist of humor? I leave it entirely to others to judge whether portions of the book are funny. I respect their judgment and hope they will recognize mine as a feeble attempt to do justice to the task, however necessarily subjective it is. From the outset I warned my reader that many of these episodes are "merely a droll analogy, witty reasoning, or a ridiculous metaphor."

Hart would have preferred a shorter volume. Many seasoned Kierkegaard readers have a favorite story and would have been outraged had I left it out. I did not include every anecdote but preferred to err by amplitude rather than by paucity.

Thomas C. Oden
Department of Theology
Drew University
Madison, New Jersey

For the sake of a Christianity that is philosophically informed and exploratory, I strongly protest David B. Hart's comments on Immanuel Kant in the January issue of FIRST THINGS. Mr. Hart dismisses the texts of Kant's philosophical maturity, presumably including all three Critiques, as well as the *Prolegomena* and the *Groundwork*, on account of their "sublime spiritual sterility." It is hard for me to believe that Mr. Hart has ever read these works with any care, if at all. He has almost certainly not read Karl Jaspers' little book on Kant, nor has he, even though an Eastern Orthodox theologian, apparently paid much attention to the writings of Nicolas Berdyaev. Al-

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though not a Christian by profession, Jaspers' philosophy was Christian in many of its tenets, and he was also systematically Kantian. Jaspers' book on Kant brings out the Prussian philosopher's rich spiritual resources. Berdyaev, whose writings seem to me quite the opposite of spiritually sterile, admired Kant above all other philosophers, and he counted himself, at least at times, a Kantian (and at the same time, of course, as Christian). It goes without saying that the bearing of Kant's philosophy on Christianity is open to debate. What is not open to debate, however, is the relevance of that philosophy to spiritual concerns.

Mr. Hart also considers Kant to be "the most boring man ever to darken a wigmaker's doorway." This presumably is due to his being so sublimely spiritually sterile. I grant that Kant was not a gifted or graceful writer. I grant, too, that reading him is hard, and sometimes exasperating. Need I point out, however, that his impact on writers and thinkers ever since the publication of *The Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 has been explosive? He has no doubt misled some of them, whether wittingly or not, but he has not bored them.

I don't feel that statements so uninformed and unthinking as Mr. Hart's should be published in a serious intellectual journal. But perhaps I am just lacking a sense of humor. That this is the case is perhaps indicated by the fact that I do not find "amusing" the story of Schopenhauer's throwing a cleaning woman over a balustrade to the landing below.

Glenn Tinder
Lincoln, Massachusetts

In "The Tangled Web" (Public Square, November 2001), Richard John Neuhaus referred to Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* as an "effetely sneering exercise in debunking one's betters." I was reminded of that as I read David B. Hart's "The Laughter of the Philosophers." Here we discover that Kant was "the single most boring man ever to darken a wigmaker's doorway" and that his *Critique of Pure Reason* is "nearly as fanciful, silly, and diverting as *Alice in Wonderland*," that Hegel possessed a "grindingly pompous soul," that Derrida was insufferably self-infatuated, that Kierkegaard's contribution to philosophy is "dubious" and his understanding of Christianity "disastrously false," and that Isaiah Berlin was "one of the twentieth century's most indefatigably fraudulent intellectuals." Perhaps as he flounders in such deep waters, Mr. Hart's struggles for breath become raspberries. But why would First Things publish such tripe?

Ben M. Carter
Irving, Texas

David B. Hart is appealingly hopeful about those who, while themselves undedicated to Christ, may yet be haunted by the love of Christ communicated to them through the signs and symbols of a once-Christianized society. But he is still too quick to exclude the legitimate place of shrillness in the community of the lapsed or the lazy. (From within the Orthodox tradition, one thinks of the almost unbearable urgency of St. Symeon the New Theologian.) As for Mr. Hart's attack upon Kierkegaard's *Attack Upon Christendom*, it seems that for all of Hart's interest in gnomic communication, he takes Kierkegaard a bit too straightforwardly here. For one thing, this particular work was never meant as a complete statement upon Christianity in the world. One need only read Kierkegaard's journal to see this. Nor was it intended as an object for pure contemplation (let alone entertainment). It was a self-consciously hyperbolic wake-up call, a "shock-book." To judge it according to the criteria Mr. Hart employs is to detach it from its context.

Would one object to the Prophet Amos because he was shrill in denouncing empty liturgical show? Should Kierkegaard, too, have been more spiritually advanced—somehow—than to get himself all worked up over hypocrisy? Mr. Hart's hero of faith, Hamann, may have been beyond such things. Scripture, though, along with the bulk of the patristic and canonical tradition, is shrill and tiresome rather more in the manner of Kierkegaard.

Will Cohen
Doctoral Candidate in Theology
Catholic University of America
Washington, D.C.

David B. Hart's article was an essay in praise of J. G. Hamann disguised as a review of Thomas C. Oden's book. The author expresses such antipathy toward Kierkegaard's thought that one wonders why he would agree to review a work on Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard's humor is said to be tiresome, his philosophical contributions dubious, his understanding of Christianity false in significant respects, his critique of another's philosophical positions obvious at best, his assault on "Christendom" barren and unsubtle, and his presentation of the Christian paradox a meretricious and misleading appeal. Have Hart and I read the same author? (I, too, am a believer.)

According to Mr. Hart, Hamann, not Kierkegaard, deserves the title of "most amusing" philosopher. Kierkegaard turns out to be an epigone of Hamann and only questionably a humorist. Meanwhile, Thomas Oden's book is damned by faint praise.

But not to worry: Kierkegaard can be enlisted in Thomas Oden's defense. And as usual he has the situation well covered in his own astute (and humorous) way:

> A reviewer he cannot properly be called, but the whole episode, like many earlier ones in literature, reminds me of what one sees in daily life. On market day, the farmer drives in with his

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> wares; he has them carefully packed in clean wrappings; he is already happily anticipating that when he opens up, everything must look clean, inviting, and tempting to the buyers. But the buyer does not come first. No, first come three or four loathsome marketplace loafers who paw and tear at the wares and soil the clean meat with their loathsome handling. This reviewer can best be compared to that kind of marketplace loafer; they have not only loathsomeness in common but also their aim: to earn a little drink money—by carrying home and by reviewing.

Or did Hamann say this also? And better?

Robert B. Scheidt
Van Wert, Ohio

David B. Hart describes Hegel's philosophical prose as "leaden, caliginous bombast." But there is another Hegel, possibly influenced (like Kierkegaard) by Hamann, who is tremendously witty and an able competitor with Kierkegaard. This is the Hegel who says that Kant, whose *Critique of Pure Reason* asks us to understand reason before trying to use it, is like the "scholastic who wanted to learn to swim" before getting in the water; who says that Kant's description of the cosmological proof for God's existence as a "nest of contradictions" applies best to Kant's own moral philosophy; who compares emotivist philosophers to those about whom the Psalmist says "God gives them wisdom in their sleep" (and thus what they produce is only dreams); who characterizes the "Absolute Idea" of Schelling as the "night in which all cows are black" and an "infinite abyss" into which all concrete content vanishes; who advises those who wonder whether they can really know sense objects to consider the wisdom of brute animals, who don't stand paralyzed before sense particulars but just "gobble them up"; and who speaks about the humor of nature, which "combines the organ of its highest fulfillment, the organ of generation, with the organ of urination."

Howard P. Kainz
Philosophy Department
Marquette University
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

David B. Hart replies:
The danger of writing an ostentatiously opinionated piece, and of using flippancy as a means for securing a few cheap laughs, is that the objects of one's irreverence are often the objects of others' sincerest devotion. That said, I remain largely impenitent regarding this article, principally because I do not believe—nor do I think it legitimate to conclude—that every unflattering remark made about some aspect of a philosopher's work or personality is equivalent to a complete rejection of that philosopher. Of many of the figures I mock, I am both an admirer and a student.

Thomas C. Oden is correct to defend his selection from Kierkegaard's works; I remain firm in my opinion—which is of course a purely subjective judgment—that the volume contains many passages that are not very amusing, and some that are not meant to be. It is an excellent selection for all that, and gives me yet another reason to admire Professor Oden's scholarship. As for my remark about Christian whorehouses, it was—in context—clear enough I think; in case I am wrong about this, however, please be assured that I was not attempting some devious defense of illicit entertainments. It was, I should mention, the express desire of the editor of the article that I should attempt to take up Prof. Oden's "gauntlet"; given the nature of the anthology, he wisely thought that a more interesting course to pursue than writing a simple review.

I can assure Mr. Tinder that I have read all of Kant's major works, often and carefully. To remark that Kant was a very boring man is to say nothing that even his admirers would not generally acknowledge, and to confess my low opinion of the developed form of his transcendental idealism is hardly to deny his epochal significance or his genius. I do in fact like several aspects of Jaspers' treatments of Kant. I have not read much Berdyaev, though, since my early twenties; I tend to think that this is about the time at which one should stop reading him, but perhaps a second look is called for. As for the Schopenhauer anecdote, *de gustibus non est disputandum.*

While I am of course entirely disarmed by the richness of Mr. Carter's argument, I am not confident he can properly assess the degree of my intellectual buoyancy or determine whether I am indeed "floundering in deep waters" (and, surely, in the cases of Derrida and Berlin, the metaphor should have been something more like "thrashing in the shallows"). I suspect (or at least hope) that FIRST THINGS publishes my tripe because the editors believe that my judgments, however misguided, at least proceed from some measure of scholarly competence. It is, I like to think, a very high quality tripe.

I must add, though, that Mr. Carter has attributed to me a remark I did not and would not make; it was the *Critique of Practical Reason*—not *Pure Reason*—about which I was so rude, and my remark was anything but frivolous. Frankly, the second *Critique* has been so often and so devastatingly taken apart (Hegel's attack on Kantian ethics, for instance, is a *tour de force*) that it is a wonder that the poor beast has not long since slouched off to some secluded grotto to expire peacefully from its wounds. Let me point to just one notorious defect of Kant's ethical thought, identified originally by such contemporaries of Kant as Tittel and Pistorius: that the categorical imperative's uni-

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versality cannot be demonstrated apart from an examination of consequences. Hence Kant's infamous appeal (in the *Grundlegung*) to the trustworthiness of money lending, which all at once renders what is supposed to be an austerely deontological ethics indistinguishable from pure utilitarianism.

This is not a momentary wobble: at this point the acrobat has slipped off the high wire altogether and brought the show to a tragic halt. Simply said, it is manifestly false that the moral law can be grounded in the transcendental subject; reason—at least as Kant understands it—cannot establish the categorical imperative in itself: either it must submit to some calculation of consequences or it must degenerate into sheer assertion, premised upon a transcendental feat of will. This latter course, in fact, is already adumbrated at certain junctures in the *Opus Postumum*. This is one reason why the transcendental project could not help but gravitate towards the metaphysics of the will in Fichte and even in Schopenhauer (who correctly viewed himself as a child of Kant) and Nietzsche (as Heidegger so acutely recognized). It is also one reason why I (personally) find the second *Critique* fanciful, silly, and diverting.

If I could grant that Kierkegaard was indeed a prophetic (or, as he might have it, apostolic) witness to Christian truth, I would concede Mr. Cohen's point without reservation. But this I cannot fully grant, for the reasons I give in my article, and for others.

Mr. Scheidt treats certain of my remarks about Kierkegaard as though they were *obiter dicta*, insouciantly tossed off without context or explanation. Since I said at some length both what I admire in Kierkegaard and what I do not, I feel little need to explain myself further. Mr. Scheidt is clearly distressed to learn that there might be theologians and Christian philosophers whose appreciation of Kierkegaard is more equivocal than his; but I am far from being unique in this regard. As for the (really very badly written) quote Mr. Scheidt adduces from Kierkegaard's private papers, it is a good specimen of precisely those aspects of Kierkegaard's work I find so disheartening. It might have been apposite to my article if Kierkegaard's work were only now appearing on the scene; it scarcely applies to a considered opinion upon his entire legacy 150 years after his death. And yes, as it happens, Hamann did say much the same thing, but with much less peevishness and far more wit.

With Professor Kainz I am mostly in agreement. I did not mean to give Hegel short shrift. I observed that his prose was turgid and his character pompous, which is correct on both counts. He also, however, possessed a savage and sometimes surgically exact wit. Moreover, he possessed one of the most majestic philosophical minds the world has ever seen, and no one else's thought excites in me so intoxicating a combination of rapt admiration and sincere dread.

Which is only to emphasize, once again—as the excitable Mr. Carter would do well to remember—that irreverence is not the same thing as contempt. Occasionally it is a sign of long familiarity and perhaps an absence of misplaced piety.

Pledging Allegiance

In "Saving the Pledge" (January), Vincent Phillip Muñoz laments the Pledge Protection Act, which removes the Pledge of Allegiance from Supreme Court jurisdiction, and recommends instead that conservatives pursue a Supreme Court decision favoring the "under God" language of the Pledge. Professor Muñoz is worried that state courts will otherwise reject it. But given that Congress has "plenary authority" and that the Supreme Court cannot be trusted (yet) on this issue, why not leave it to Congress (with executive branch help if necessary) to state plainly the position of the federal government in favor of "under God"? Not being a legal scholar, I don't know if this means pursuing a constitutional amendment or whether it can be done by some simpler tactic. But I think it makes sense to bypass the High Court if possible.

Steven P. Sawyer
Fountain Hills, Arizona

I substantially agree with Vincent Phillip Muñoz's point. If you want to defend the wording of the Pledge as it is, stripping the Supreme Court of jurisdiction over Pledge cases is not a good way to do so. But I think Professor Muñoz's argument overlooks several important distinctions that are relevant to the topic of First Amendment jurisprudence.

First, Prof. Muñoz fails to distinguish between (what I would call) religious and theological uses of the term "God." A religious use of the term is an invocation of God—calling upon God, or talking to God. A theological use of the term is not an invocation of God, but a reference to God—not talking *to* God, but talking *about* God. In his article, however, Muñoz seems to suppose that every use of the term "God" is religious.

Second, within the realm of theological uses of the term "God," the article does not distinguish between talking about supernatural truths and talking about natural truths. The Catholic tradition makes a clear distinction between those (natural) truths that can be known on the basis of reason alone and those (supernatural) truths that must be revealed if they are to be known. In the Catholic tradition, many references to God fall within the realm of natural truths. The question that must be answered, then, is whether calling the United States "one nation under God" is a natural or a supernatural truth.

Perhaps this article was not the place to establish or discuss these dis-

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tinctions, but until they are observed and become part of the "furniture of the mind" in both the judiciary and the general public, there will be very little clear thinking about First Amendment issues.

Edward M. Hogan
Theology Department
Duchesne Academy
of the Sacred Heart
Omaha, Nebraska

Vincent Phillip Muñoz replies:
I thank Steven P. Sawyer and Edward M. Hogan for their letters.

One problem with bypassing the Supreme Court, which Mr. Sawyer suggests, is that even if the federal government announces that it supports "under God," state supreme courts would still be bound by the Supreme Court's establishment precedents. A fair reading of those precedents does not favor a religious Pledge of Allegiance. So bypassing the Supreme Court is not a sure way to protect "under God." As I stated in my article, a better course of action would be to go on the judicial offensive and attempt to overturn those misguided precedents through a second Pledge case.

Professor Hogan nicely explains the difference between theological and religious uses of the term "God." He suggests that there "will be very little clear thinking about First Amendment issues" until the courts take cognizance of such distinctions. I do not want to underestimate their philosophical capacities, but the last group whom I would trust to accurately distinguish natural from supernatural truth is the federal judiciary.

Anglican Engagement

Douglas Farrow's analysis of the state of Anglicanism after the Windsor Report ("Anglicanism Runs Aground," January) was thorough, insightful, and moderately compelling. Having asked similar questions about Anglicanism myself, I am moderately inclined towards at least one of his conclusions: the Worldwide Anglican Communion is, in some ways, being "theologically and ecumenically irresponsible." However, I am not sure if I understand Dr. Farrow's suggestion that we should "put in at the nearest Roman harbor . . . and prepare to talk honestly about the situation." Is he simply suggesting a conversation to see if unity with the Roman Catholic Church is possible? Or, along with thousands of other Anglicans (the "Anglican Continuum" included), is he suggesting that we should abandon ship and submit to Rome? If he is suggesting the former, I heartily agree. If he is suggesting the latter, I militantly disagree.

Honest and loving dialogue between churches is a biblical and evangelical imperative. And far more conversation is required. Nevertheless, Rome is not the only viable answer. While I appreciate the implications of Pope John Paul II's encyclical on ecumenism—*Ut Unum Sint* (That They May Be One)—I am not sure that it provides adequate answers to our present debacle. While we Anglicans may fail by providing an atmosphere of compromise and tolerance that (in application) far exceeds what either Holy Scripture or the sixteenth-century Reformers intended, Rome fails by providing structures that are far too restrictive. Let us remember, in spite of the many fine points of *Ut Unum Sint*, that its arguments and conclusions are essentially Roman and not ecumenical (i.e., catholic). That is, it suggests that non-Roman churches should offer suggestions as to how the gift of papal authority should be understood and exercised—but entirely on Roman terms. To cite but one example, if I were to propose that papal infallibility should be dispensed with, the suggestion would be flatly rejected.

(The Rev.) Donald P. Richmond
Anglican Province of America
(Western Diocese)
Apple Valley, California

Douglas Farrrow replies:
It was very Anglican of me, I fear, to be only "moderately compelling," rather than to offer something with which one might "heartily agree" or "militantly disagree." But what did I mean by my final remark? Was I implying that the HMS Anglican might well be parked permanently in a Roman dry dock, were its crew to respond in good faith to the invitation embodied in *Ut Unum Sint*? Perhaps I was. But obviously Pastor Richmond and I are not reading that document in the same way. I don't see it as a veiled demand for submission, but as an invitation in good faith. Does it not take its bearings from the martyrial faith that trusts only in the Lord, and not in instruments of worldly wisdom or power? The Roman Catholic Church may not as yet have fathomed the deep into which it has sailed with *Ut Unum Sint*, but to dismiss the document as "essentially Roman and not ecumenical" is neither fair nor charitable. Indeed, that dismissal itself sounds rather like a demand for submission.

Just War Today

In "Just War, As It Was and Is" (January), James Turner Johnson makes a good case for the development of just war theory to deal with the "actual face" of modern war. However, his description of contemporary war misses the mark. He sees civil wars, fights between warlords, containment of terrorists, and employment of smart-bomb technology, but he doesn't see the other side of the coin: détente of mutually assured destruction, which continues now between the U.S. and Russia and is the model for the present standoffs between Pakistan and India, Israel and Iran. In all countries with nuclear weapons, it is likely that orders have been issued to the military for their use under certain conditions. This is the face of cold war, which is just as much "war" as is the containment of

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terrorists. In order to be useful, just war theory must deal with mutually assured destruction and other uses of modern weapons not just as addenda but as core issues.

Bob Hagenmaier
Winter Haven, Florida

James Turner Johnson's discussion of the just war tradition is a truly significant account of the ways in which recent formulations of just war teaching depart from the authentic just war tradition.

I am in substantial agreement with Professor Johnson's critique of the "presumptionist" position and its cousin, the "Catholic peace tradition," but I do not see the latter as a lay expansion of the sacerdotal priesthood's combat exemption. To be sure, Catholic tradition has always opposed the notion that the secular state of life is equal in merit to the religious state, but this recognition of a distinction of merit should not be confused with a supposed "historical (and doctrinal) distinction between the 'high' morality of the religious and the 'lower' morality of the laity."

In his *Opusculum XVII* (1257), Thomas Aquinas argues that no such split-level or stratified morality characterizes Catholicity in the first place—which is also to say that no such stratified morality separates those whose state of life exempts them from "carrying the sword" from those whose state of life obliges them to do so. Against Vigilantius, Aquinas writes: "[T]hey say, we must go from the Commandments to the Counsels, as from imperfection to perfection. But this proposition is false. We know from the very words of Our Lord [Matthew 22:37], that the first and chief commandment of the Law is the love of God and of our fellow men. . . . Hence, as the Apostle says to the Colossians [3:14], 'But above all these things, have charity, which is the bond of perfection.' . . . For charity binds all things together."

There is a single ethic of perfection, then; whence the full force of Aquinas' decision, as Johnson notes, to place "his discussion of just war in the context of his treatment of the virtue of caritas."

As for the "modern-war pacifist" position, I am not sure I would follow Prof. Johnson in his reading of the bishops' *Postulata* of 1870 as linearly related to modern-war pacifism. I see the *Postulata* instead as a prophetic document. Its protest against large standing armies is, in effect, a protest against the grave ambiguity created by their mobilization. It is no easy task to determine whether a standing army is on a defensive or offensive footing. Recognition of this difficulty belongs to what Prof. Johnson calls the "consensual normative wisdom" of the just war tradition, just as—soldier by soldier—these armies belong to mankind's normative memory; and to normative memory's "weak" redemptive power: "The scent of freshly mown clover redeemed the perished armies and // the meadows glittered in headlights forever" (Czeslaw Milosz).

John F. Maguire
Natural Law Jurisprudence Center
Berkeley, California

James Turner Johnson replies:
I thank Bob Hagenmaier and John F. Maguire for the observations they make in these letters, though I suspect they have misunderstood me in critical ways.

I have no quarrel with Mr. Hagenmaier's main point, which is that the just war tradition (not "theory") must deal with the question of nuclear proliferation and possible use of nuclear weapons in war. In other contexts, such as in my 1984 book *Can Modern War Be Just?*, I have done my best to show how the just war tradition is useful for thinking about this question. But in the paragraph of my article Mr. Hagenmaier refers to I was talking about something else—namely, the distortion of just war thinking that resulted from the "conception of gross destructiveness as inherent in modern warfare," which I argued was one of the roots of the "presumption against war" set out in *The Challenge of Peace*. I noted that this document "rejected Ramsey's conception that even in the case of nuclear weapons the key issue is human moral control" and that it instead adopted a conclusion mirroring that of Jonathan Schell in *The Fate of the Earth*. The bishops judged that nuclear weapons are by their nature indiscriminate and disproportionate. Like others arguing against nuclear weapons at the time, they seem to have believed that any war involving the superpowers or any war into which they might be drawn, even if it began locally and conventionally, would escalate to a general nuclear exchange and a global nuclear holocaust. Hence the "presumption against war." But my point in the article was that this assumption was wrong: "the actual face of warfare since 1945 has been that of civil wars and regional armed conflicts," which did not in fact escalate to a global nuclear exchange between the superpowers. Just war thinking needs to be able to address such warfare on its own terms, not on terms shaped by the effort to rule out use of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Maguire's comments on exactly how Catholic thought relates the moral life of the religious to that of the laity are welcome. I note that I put "higher" and "lower" into quotation marks when referring to the morality of the religious and that of the laity. To be sure, everything aims at charity and finds its perfection there. But there is a distinction nonetheless between those in the religious life and the laity: the former have received a special vocation, which is a sign of a particular gift of grace that the laity do not have. In the moral life, this translates into a different relationship to the virtues and into different possibilities for developing and manifesting virtue. It also means that religious

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live their earthly lives differently in important respects. To take some important examples: they do not marry; they do not own property; they do not carry the sword. Their relationship to war is thus one that follows from the vocation and the grace they have received. The laity are assumed not to have that special addition of grace, and so their lives, their relationship to the virtues, and their responsibilities are different. Thus, as I argued in the article, it was a mistake to interpret the idea that the spirituality of the religious should be extended among the laity to mean that the laity, too, should not bear the sword. One might as well have said that the laity should not marry, should not own property, should not hold public office, and so on.

As to the matter of the 1870 *Postulata*, Mr. Maguire reads its "protest against large standing armies" as "a protest against the grave ambiguity created by their mobilization." He continues by observing that it is not easy "to determine whether a standing army is on an offensive or defensive footing." The document is certainly a protest against mobilization, but the language of the document opposes the armies themselves and the destructive capacity of their weapons. I do not read its opposition to "illegal and unjust wars" as a reference to offensive (as opposed to defensive) uses of those armies: the idea that only defensive wars may be just and that offensive ones are always unjust belongs to the twentieth century, while in 1870 the legality and justification of resort to military force had to do with other things. I read this document as protesting the type of war that would result from the use of those large standing armies and their highly developed destructive powers. It was the destruction to be expected from such war—the "hideous massacres spreading far and wide"—that the authors of the *Postulata* saw as evil, whether their mobilization and use was for offensive or defensive purposes. And this is modern-war pacifism in a nutshell: the position that the use of armed force itself, regardless of reason, has become unjust because of its inherent destructiveness.

Abortion Battles

I was disappointed to see that your journal has once again chosen a lead article that diminishes the full teaching of the Catholic Church. In "Bob Casey's Revenge" (January), William McGurn tells us that anyone who thinks that the pro-life message is larger than the issue of abortion is an "enabler" of death and an ally of the pro-choice movement. Mr. McGurn's article does a disservice to conscientious Catholics who try to see all issues through a pro-life lens, and who refuse to be held captive by the myopia promoted by so many political ideologues and journalists. In the end, I suspect that articles like Mr. McGurn's further divide the Church along political lines and alienate brothers and sisters in Christ who do not share the same political allegiances.

Mr. McGurn appears to be saying that only one issue actually matters—and that anyone who isn't working to eliminate abortion in just the way that Republicans are is an "enabler" of the pro-choice movement. While at the margins this might be true, it seems hard to indict all pro-life Democrats for their belief that other pro-life issues matter, and that abortion may be best addressed in this political climate through different means.

Perhaps the real issue is that our country lacks a legitimate pro-life party. Instead of trying to divide our church between Republicans and Democrats, FIRST THINGS should try to promote a thoroughly pro-life position that transcends our current two-party system.

Brendan Wilson
Washington, D.C.

While it remains to be seen whether "Bob Casey's Revenge" will aid the Democratic Party in rediscovering its priorities, don't expect too much from Casey's own backyard of Northeastern Pennsylvania. Although Catholics in this region are devoted to the Governor's memory, the pro-life movement is thriving, unemployment is down, and President Bush made numerous visits to the area, all it took was an endorsement from Bob Casey, Jr. to hand over the region's Catholics (and with it possibly the state) to Senator Kerry.

Glen Andrew Poggi Johnson
Department of Theology
University of Scranton
Scranton, Pennsylvania

Newton's God

I read with pleasure Avery Cardinal Dulles' rich essay on "The Deist Minimum" (January). The timing seems providential in that just this week I read that Anthony Flew, the British poster boy for atheism, has at the age of eighty-one abandoned his atheism in favor of belief in a super-intelligent being who is the designer of the universe. Flew explains that he continues to reject the biblical God of the Christians and Muslims (and Jews?) as an "oriental despot" akin to Saddam Hussein but favors the idea of the deist conception of God held by Jefferson. Cardinal Dulles makes the statement that deism served as a kind of "halfway house on the road to atheism." One now wonders if it may provide shelter on the return trip. Let us pray.

I would, however, like to raise a question about Cardinal Dulles' assessment of Isaac Newton. He leaves the impression that Newton was a deist, or nearly so. This represents an earlier scholarly consensus that should now be abandoned. Not only was Newton not a deist; he believed deism heretical and harmful. For this reason he was instrumental in the for-

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mulation of the Boyle Lectures, whose avowed purpose was "to prove the truth of the Christian religion against infidels." The infidels *du jour* were the atheists and deists.

Cardinal Dulles writes that Newton discovered mathematical laws that henceforth made divine intervention superfluous. This was the conclusion that the French Encyclopedists imposed on Newton's mechanics. Newton himself believed that God was actively involved in upholding creation by the continual exercise of His will. Deists rejected the concept of revealed religion. Newton embraced it—especially in regard to biblical prophecy and chronology, on both of which he was expert.

Even Newton's Trinitarian views, which Cardinal Dulles says caused him to "reject the doctrine of the trinity and incarnation as irrational" are under reassessment. I believe that by the 1690s Isaac Newton's Trinitarian position could be considered compatible with the position of the Eastern Church Fathers of the fourth century, especially Eusebius of Caesarea and Basil of Ancyra.

Scholarship on Newton's religion is gradually bringing him in from the cold. People may continue to debate various elements of his religion, but, in the words of Newton scholar James Force, one thing is sure: "He was no deist."

Thomas C. Pfizenmaier
Bonhomme Presbyterian Church
Chesterfield, Missouri

Avery Cardinal Dulles replies:
I agree, and actually said, that Newton was not a deist and that his God was active in the universe. Newton accepted revealed religion and was in some sense a Christian. On these points there is no dispute.

In saying that Newton rejected the Trinity I was following the standard accounts. According to James Gleik, in his 2003 biography, Newton regarded Christ as God's son, a mediator between God and humanity, chosen to be a prophet and messenger, and exalted to God's right hand. But on the ground that Christ was not God, he refused to use the initials "AD" for reckoning dates. He likewise denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Not only did he reject the Trinity; he regarded Trinitarianism as a sin of idolatry.

I am grateful to Dr. Pfizenmaier for the information that Newton at some point in his life accepted positions similar to those of Eusebius of Caesarea and Basil of Ancyra, who are generally classified as semi-Arians. That removes him from the strictly Arian camp but still leaves him short of a robust Trinitarian orthodoxy.

I did say that Newton's mathematical physics gave "indirect support" to deism. The use made of him by the French Encyclopedists may be considered evidence.

The Virtue of Tolerance

It was a surprise to read Richard John Neuhaus' assertion that "tolerance is a virtue" (While We're At It, January), since several arguments can be made refuting the idea.

First, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls upon us to always be filled with this or that virtue, each of which is clearly described and discussed. Tolerance is not on the list. To the contrary, we are called upon to be sometimes *intolerant* in the face of unjust laws (§§ 1903, 2242). It is worth noting that Catholic teaching never admonishes us to be unwise, intemperate, pitiless, cowardly, weak, or otherwise non-virtuous in any way.

Second, tolerance must always be directed towards, and supportive of, *wrong things only*, to the exclusion of good things. This is a characteristic unknown to virtuous acts. It is impossible to "tolerate" good things, for good things are welcomed and embraced rather than tolerated. Virtue exists for the Good; tolerance exists for the sake of the wrong.

Third, there are indeed times and situations requiring us to reluctantly tolerate wrong things, but we must not be misled to believe that the tolerance itself is the virtuous act. Tolerance, like war, is at best a necessary evil. The virtuous acts in such cases are those that sustain us as we tolerate, or fight, the evils at hand, and would include serenity, patience, courage, and others as the situation dictates.

A case could be made that tolerance is more of a vice than a virtue. I do not know the origin of the following but am told that Dorothy Sayers gets the credit: "Tolerance, which in hell is called despair, is the sin which believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, loves nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and only remains alive because there is nothing it would die for."

Donald H. Griese II
Eureka, Missouri

RJN replies:
Tolerance is defined in many different ways, as I indicated in the item to which Mr. Griese is responding. The discussion was not about tolerating good things or bad things but about tolerating persons, in which case toleration is more than reluctantly putting up with someone. It is genuine respect for the dignity of the person created in the image of God, no matter how wrongheaded he or she may be. That is the virtue, often called tolerance, that is to be cultivated.

Correction

In "Santayana Lately Revisited" (FT February), the proper date for his lecture "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy" is 1911, not 1932.

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Opinion

Who Wants War? An Exchange

Paul J. Griffiths

The intense debate in the United States since September 11 about the meaning, history, and contemporary applicability of just war theory—much of it conducted in the pages of First Things—has been instructive and for the most part at a high level of conceptual and ethical sophistication. It has also been good for the intellectual life of the Catholic Church and for the moral and civic health of the U.S. The vigor of the debate certainly shows the continued liveliness of the Catholic tradition, and given the deeply Protestant nature of this country, it is to say the least surprising that the dominant public vocabulary for the discussion of war is one provided by the Catholic Church.

However, there is one aspect of the debate that is, to me, simply puzzling. It is the question of whether the *ius ad bellum*—the principles governing thought about when it is proper for states to go to war—does or does not contain a presumption against *bellum*, against, that is, the use of lethal violence by the state against other states or the citizens thereof. Proponents of the view that there is no such presumption (George Weigel, James Turner Johnson, and others) assert with vigor that the classical theorists from Augustine onwards assumed that engaging in war was among the proper and ordinary functions of a legally constituted sovereign authority. If, then, they claim, debates about the propriety of particular wars are begun by stating a general presumption against war, this will be to skew the debate and to misrepresent the tradition. Those who disagree with this position (Rowan Williams, Stanley Hauerwas, and others) have typically done so on historical or exegetical grounds. But it appears to me to be easy and quick to show that the position advocated by Johnson and Weigel is wrong on simple logical grounds, grounds that do not require decisions about controversial and difficult exegetical matters such as what Augustine thought or what Aquinas meant. Here's how it goes.

Consider any action permitted under some (but not all) conditions to some agent. Any action so defined is, *ex definitio*, denied to that same agent under some conditions: that's the force of the some/all distinction. There is, then, for any action so defined, a presumption against it for the agent in question; or, what is the same thing, a presumption that it does not follow just from the nature of the agent that the action in question may rightly be performed by that agent. Superadded to the nature of the agent must be the relevant conditions or circumstances, whatever these are. Only when these conditions are met—these circumstances in place—is the agent permitted to perform the action. Otherwise, not. The frequency with which these conditions or circumstances are in place is not to the point; what is to the point is only that there be some such conditions or circumstances, and that they be of the kind that (at least logically) may not be in place.

It follows from the unimpeachable (I think) argument of the preceding paragraph that the *onus probandi* for any action permitted to an agent only sometimes, in particular circumstances, rests with those who would argue that the action is permitted to the agent now, in these circumstances. And, once again, this is just another way of saying that there is a presumption against the action in question.

Let's apply this to an everyday case from Chicago, where I live. It does not follow from being human and over fifteen years of age that it is proper for a person to have a driver's license in Illinois. Tests must be taken and passed in order for the license to be granted. Getting a driver's license is, then, an instance of an action permitted under some (but not all) conditions to the members of the set of human beings over fifteen and resident in Chicago. There is a presumption against it by the state of Illinois, and the burden of proof lies upon citizens to show that the conditions have been met, which is to say that the presumption can be rebutted.

Another example: it does not follow from belonging to the set of human beings with valid tickets for a particular flight that a given person may properly board that flight. Various other tests must be met, as travelers by air since September 11 know all too well, and the burden lies upon those would-be travelers to do what is necessary to pass them. And so on.

The case of legally constituted sovereign authorities and declarations of war is logically indistinguishable from these. It does not follow just from being such an authority that a state may properly declare war; further conditions must be met. These conditions are specified by the *ius ad bellum*. And that there are such conditions is just what it means, logically speaking, for there to be a presumption against the action in question—and, further, for the burden of proof to rest upon those

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who would show that the conditions have been met. There is in this sense—the only interesting sense, conceptually speaking, so far as I can tell—a presumption against war enshrined in the just war tradition. And if this is right, Weigel, Johnson, et al., must be wrong, at least about this matter.

That the anti-presumption-against-war crowd is wrong is derived from the logic of the matter alone. It is simple confusion to think otherwise, and Johnson's recent effort (see FT January) to construe presumption-against in terms of worries about the inherent morality of war, or about the nature of prima facie duties, amounts to nothing more than the blowing of thick clouds of smoke. The position I've advocated is compatible with thinking war often justified, sometimes justified, or (even) never justified. What it is not compatible with is thinking there is no presumption against war in the tradition. The presence of reasoning about *ius ad bellum* suffices to show this to be false.

It might seem that what I've argued is, if true, trivial. But I don't think it is: it shows where thought must begin on this question and how it must proceed. And that is never trivial. I suspect, too, that the anti-presumption-against-war advocates agree that it is not trivial. So, at least, their vociferousness in arguing the confused counter-position leads me to believe.

Paul J. Griffiths is Schmitt Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His latest book is Lying: An Augustinian Theology of Duplicity *(Brazos Press).*

George Weigel

A father had spoken many times to his ten-year-old son about the dangers of playing with matches. When the son nonetheless persisted in indulging his fascination with matches inside the house, the father spoke firmly to him again, then grounded him for a weekend, then compelled the boy to write a hundred-word essay on why playing with matches is dangerous for himself and his family. Finally, when the father caught the son lighting matches in the garage, right beside the family gasoline can, he took the lad inside and vigorously displayed his paternal disapprobation in a manner uncomfortable to the filial posterior.

Would any meaningful moral description of this situation say that its moral logic, or the father's moral reasoning, began with a "presumption against spanking"? Of course not. The beginning of the exercise of parental authority is precisely that: the father's recognition that he has a moral obligation to inculcate in his son the habits of prudence and obedience, and thus to protect his son (and the rest of the family, and possibly the neighborhood) from the boy's own childish irresponsibility.

Or take Paul Griffiths' automotive example. The state of Illinois claims the sovereign authority to regulate the use of motor vehicles within its boundaries. Through the actions of its legislature and the relevant regulatory agencies, Illinois sets numerous conditions on that use: myopic people have to wear glasses or contact lenses while driving; people with retinitis pigmentosa are forbidden from driving at night; teenagers must reach a certain age and demonstrate certain skills before they obtain driver's licenses; people with a habit of driving after knocking back a dozen Budweisers lose their licenses. Does any of this reasonably constitute a "presumption against licensing drivers," which the state can "override" when certain other conditions are met?

If any possible action to which reasonable moral conditions apply is, by reason of those conditions, an action against which there can be said to be a "presumption," then there is a "presumption" against almost any imaginable action, including state action. Perhaps that's true, at some stratospheric level of abstraction. But what does it illuminate about things? What, to get down to cases, does it teach us about the proportionate and discriminate use of armed force in the pursuit of the peace of order, justice, and freedom?

Let's clarify one thing that really shouldn't need clarification, but which evidently does. If by "presumption against war" we mean that those thinking within the just war tradition ought to prefer that there not be wars, fine. Having spent nine years of my professional life working for the World Without War Council, I don't have any problem with that; and I rather doubt that James Turner Johnson, a scholar and army veteran, would, either. But the very fact that that statement of the obvious has to be made suggests one of the problems with the way the so-called "presumption against war" operates today: it subtly suggests that those who do not accept the smuggled pacifist premise within the "presumption"—that the use of even proportionate and discriminate armed force is, at the outset of the moral analysis, presumptively deplorable—are somehow thought to be warmongers. How any of this constitutes an advance in moral reasoning or moral sensibility over the classic just war understanding—that the use of armed force can be noble or wicked, just or unjust, depending on who is using it, toward what ends, and how—is unclear to me.

There are several other problems with the "presumption" and its current functioning among reli-

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gious leaders and religious intellectuals (not to mention political leaders throughout Western Europe). As I have argued in these pages and elsewhere, the "presumption," by detaching the just war way of thinking from its proper political context—the right use of sovereign public authority toward the end of *tranquillitas ordinis*, or peace—tends to invert the structure of classic just war analysis and turn it into a thin casuistry, giving priority consideration to necessarily contingent *in bello* judgments (proportionality of means, discrimination or noncombatant immunity) over what were always understood to be the prior *ad bellum* questions ("prior" in that, *inter alia*, we can have a greater degree of moral clarity about them). A similar inside-out distortion of thinking happens when the "presumption" gets to work on the *ius ad bellum*. For here, the "presumption" tends to give higher priority to what were classically understood as important but secondary criteria, like "last resort" and "probable chance of success," over the classic first-order criteria: competent authority, just cause, and right intention (about which, to repeat, we can have a greater degree of moral surety).

Then there is the sad and, to my mind, unmistakable fact that people who have adopted the so-called "presumption against war" tend to get things wrong, time and again: as the U.S. bishops got the dynamics of the Cold War wrong in their 1983 pastoral letter, "The Challenge of Peace"; as most religious leaders and intellectuals got it wrong in predicting a Middle East Armageddon in the first Gulf War and the recent Iraq War. When a moral lens constantly yields a distorted view of reality, then, I submit, something is wrong with its prismation.

The "presumption" has tended to give theologians and religious leaders a bloated sense of their own role in decision-making about war and peace. Judging from the way the "presumption" works out in practice, religious leaders and religious intellectuals now imagine that their function is to set a series of hurdles for public authorities to jump—then, if those hurdles are judged to have been successfully surmounted by the politicians, religious leaders and theologians will reluctantly give their blessing to the use of armed force in question. This hubris is in contradistinction to the clear teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*—for the *Catechism*, while assuming a serious dialogue among government officials, just war analysts, and the public, nonetheless teaches (at § 2309) that "the evaluation of these [just war] conditions for moral legitimacy belongs to the prudential judgment of those who have responsibility for the common good." The hubris has gotten so out of hand, in fact, that one prominent "presumption against war" advocate recently proposed that the *Catechism* be amended, so that a consensus of bishops, the faithful, and theologians (the last presumably shaping the judgment of the first two) be required for judging a given military action morally legitimate. One knew that certain members of the theologians' guild thought themselves a parallel magisterium, but a parallel government, too?

Finally, and much as I appreciate rhetorical high spirits, I hope Professor Griffiths will permit me the observation that it really doesn't advance the ongoing debate to suggest that James Turner Johnson is blowing smoke when he explains how James Childress' seminal 1978 article on prima facie duties and the just war tradition jump-started the "presumption against war" trope. Rather, it's a matter of recognizing the philosophical and theological roots of this influential, if misguided, notion for what they are.

George Weigel is Senior Fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.

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Bush's Second Chance

Hadley Arkes

Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety (Henry IV, Part 1). The sense of relief, felt so deeply in the pro-life community on November 3, 2004, seems to have drifted away in the weeks and months since the presidential election. It is already easy to forget how great a threat the election posed: even the most sober observers of the political scene recognized that a Kerry presidency would mark the end of any prospects for the pro-life cause in Congress or the courts. Some pro-life conservatives were on the threshold of concluding that the issue of abortion had been lost beyond retrieval, that the return of an administration unrelievedly pro-abortion would be a terminal event for the pro-life cause. For such an administration would show no inhibition in its willingness to solidify the right to abortion with every executive order, every appointment to the courts, and even in international conventions, where it would use the United Nations to endorse, at every turn, "reproductive rights." At the same time, the ground would have been prepared, in stages, for the installation of same-sex marriage by the courts. There would have been a decorous interval, of course, as the public had to be prepared and led, step by step, but so certain did the outcome seem last fall that many conservatives, not at all fainthearted, were coming to the conclusion that this issue, too, had been lost.

On the morning of November 3, however, those threats seemed to have been swept away. Eleven states voted on constitutional amendments that would confine marriage to a man and a woman as husband and wife. The amendments passed in all eleven states. The gay activists thought they had the best chance to prevail in Oregon, a liberal state, regarded by many as the most "unchurched" state in the union. But the cause of gay marriage lost there as well, with 57 percent of the voters making it clear that even a liberal state would mark limits to the reach of gay rights. The election brought a surge in Republican strength in the Congress, especially in the Senate. Suddenly the means were at hand to overcome the filibuster that had blocked conservative candidates for the bench. Not only were there five more Republicans in the Senate, but they brought a firming of conviction and confidence on the pro-life side.

And so, on the morning after the election, when the clouds lifted, the political landscape that came into view was startling. A cultural drift, seemingly inevitable, had been halted. In fact, the country now seemed at a turning point. The question was whether the political class, or the Republican party, could summon the art or the nerve it needed in order to make a breakthrough of their own in the possibilities that were suddenly open to them.

On the issue of marriage, the deeper meaning of the election was grasped at once by gay activists. The American people had become quite tolerant and accommodating on the matter of homosexuality, willing to avert their eyes and withhold their censure. But they drew the line at marriage, and that line had significance beyond the immediate controversy. Edmund White has been writing about the gay scene since the 1970s; he now teaches creative writing at Princeton. In an interview about a week after the election, he recalled his conversations with gay friends in Princeton as they surveyed the results of the referenda. It seemed jarringly clear to them that the vote involved more than marriage: their fellow citizens had cast a judgment on their way of life; voters were marking the border of their

HADLEY ARKES *is the Ney Professor of Jurisprudence at Amherst College. His most recent book is* Natural Rights and the Right to Choose *(Cambridge University Press).*

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willingness to withhold judgment. The issue of marriage had claimed an importance even for gays who had no intention of getting married themselves. For it was another step in the recognition of gay and lesbian sex as just another style of sexuality, on the same plane of legitimacy as heterosexual unions. The defeat of gay marriage was a sobering jolt, a sign that ordinary people had come to the limit of their willingness to be badgered into acceptance and to have their children catechized in a new view of the moral world.

President Bush, for one, seemed to grasp the import of these returns and the critical moment at hand. He indicated, soon after the election, that his party would press on again to amend the U.S. Constitution for the sake of securing marriage. Some Republicans may be altogether too ready to declare that the point has been tellingly made in the elections this past November, and so there is no need to go further, by amending the Constitution. But that would be a grave mistake, and a failure to act precisely when the public has been primed to act.

On the matter of abortion, however, the President did not seem to be seized with any comparable sense of moment, or any heightened awareness of possibilities now come into sight. And yet, in the case of abortion, the new possibilities had already been visible for more than two years. The President showed no keen awareness of these possibilities now, just as he had shown no awareness earlier. It was not that the facts were not there to be seen, or that the President had no means of knowing. For at least two years the White House staff, and the President it advises, had ample reason to conclude that America had reached a turning point, and that, with the slightest moves on the part of the administration—moves so slight that they did not require the exertion of an executive order—they could have produced some striking gains for the pro-life cause while fostering a deep crisis in the ranks of their adversaries. With moves modest by any measure, Mr. Bush could have advanced the pro-life cause and propelled the Democrats in Congress into an internecine war that would surely have torn them apart, and left them morally exhausted during the season of the campaign. That the President should have had no interest in inducing such strain among his adversaries, at virtually no cost to himself, must be ranked among the great political mysteries of our time. But apparently more pressing than any desire to sow confusion among his adversaries has been the President's desire to preserve his reticence on the matter of abortion.

To deepen the enigma, this reticence on the part of the President has persisted even while he has assembled an administration filled with pro-lifers at virtually every level, including the White House; an administration that is probably the most pro-life of any that has been constituted since *Roe v. Wade*. None of this can be laid to happenstance. For Mr. Bush, this reluctance to speak on abortion has been part of a policy fixed in his makeup and critical to his political design. In 1999, when he was preparing for his first presidential campaign, Mr. Bush took soundings among prominent conservatives, and the word went out: he was emphatically, decisively, on the side of the pro-lifers. He could be depended on to do the things that President Reagan and his own father had done before him to preserve a coalition that included pro-lifers. But, as the report went, he did not feel that he could "lead" with the issue of abortion. Either it was impolitic to make this question his defining issue, or he did not feel confident of his own facility in making the argument. He would speak on this vexing issue only when it was absolutely necessary for him to do so.

We could not grasp at the time just how strictly he intended to follow this rule. But we grasp it now, for it has become chillingly clear in the experience of the last two years. It was as though the White House had taken an account of the simplest, slightest measures that might be taken, and then come to the judgment that it was not in the interest of the President to do the slightest thing. There is an explanation for all of this. But it must be seen in its clear outline, for it offers a melancholy reflection of the political terrain on which pro-lifers are compelled to work, even with a pro-life president in the White House.

When it comes to the simplest, slightest thing to be done, it is hard to produce anything purer than the measure billed as "the most modest first step" on abortion, a measure that would preserve the life of the child who survived an abortion. Readers of FIRST THINGS may know that this measure had its origins in some material I had written for the debating kit of the first President Bush when he was preparing for his debates with Michael Dukakis in 1988. An account of the origin of that measure and how it was finally steered to enactment forms a central part of my recent book *Natural Rights & the Right to Choose*. One federal judge had famously opined that even a child who had survived an abortion was not protected by the law: it was a fetus marked for "termination." In other words, the right to abortion meant the right to an "effective" abortion, meaning a dead child.

But even pro-choicers insisted that their support for abortion did not imply an acceptance of infanticide. No one could pretend to argue over the human standing of the child at the point of birth—even if the child had been marked for abortion. We would invite people on the other side to join us at least in establishing this

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point: that even the surviving child marked for abortion had a claim to the protection of the law, a claim that should not depend on whether anyone *wanted* her. Our object was to plant premises in the law and give the public news that it would find jolting—namely, that the right to abortion extended through the entire period of pregnancy, and could even include the right to kill a child outside of the womb. In practice, the measure promised to save only a handful of lives. But that was nothing to be disdained. Of the 1.3 million abortions performed each year in this country, we might at least manage to stop a few.

This measure was brought forth again in July 2000, just after the Supreme Court struck down the law on partial-birth abortions in Nebraska (and, by implication, in thirty other states) in the case of *Stenberg v. Carhart*. The bill became known as the "Born-Alive Infants' Protection Act," and it was introduced just as the presidential campaign was heating up in the summer of 2000. Apart from its legislative prospects, it seemed an excellent political device for a candidate who was uncomfortable speaking about abortion in public, since it was surely the easiest bill to offer to the public. With this kind of measure, candidate Bush could hope to win the support even of pro-choice Republicans in states such as Connecticut and New Jersey. Such people would be willing to vote Republican were it not for the abortion issue. This bill gave George W. Bush the chance to approach these voters in a disarming way: "I know that we disagree on many things," he might have said, "but whatever the right to abortion means, we can surely agree that it cannot mean the right to kill a child born alive." Whether or not he convinced them, we did not see how he had anything to lose by framing the problem in this way.

But Mr. Bush did not breathe a word about this bill during his campaign. More surprising still, he did not even endorse the bill once he was in office. In the aftermath of September 11, even this modest bill was put aside, along with everything else not related to the national emergency. The bill was brought to the floor of the Republican House in March 2002, and there it passed. Then, to our astonishment, the Democratic leadership in the Senate allowed the bill to be brought to the floor in July, where it was passed by a "voice vote" without dissent. It was passed precisely because the Democrats, after much straining, took the advice of Congressman Jerry Nadler: they would quietly vote for this modest bill, hoping it would make little change in the law. In that way, they would avoid the embarrassment of having to oppose the bill with public arguments. When the bill had been introduced in July 2000, the National Abortion Rights Action League actually came out in opposition to this measure. Were it not for Jerry Nadler's counsel, between forty and fifty Democrats might have followed the lead of NARAL and torn their party apart. Here as elsewhere, our adversaries understood us better than some of our allies in Congress did, for they grasped the principle that lay at the heart of the bill.

President Bush signed the bill in Pittsburgh, in August 2002, and my friends on the White House staff were generous enough to invite me to the ceremony. In a private conversation, the President described this bill as a first step in changing the culture, and there he was right—if he wished to make a point of it. For the first time since *Roe v. Wade*, Congress had exercised its authority to legislate a limitation on abortion. What Congress had banned was the so-called "live-birth abortion," as practiced most notoriously at Christ Hospital in Oak Lawn, Illinois. In this procedure, the baby would be delivered and then put aside without cover in the refuse room, where it was left to die. This routine practice was first revealed by Jill Stanek, a nurse at the hospital, who joined me in testifying at the hearings on the Born-Alive Act.

Fast-forward two years: Jill Stanek was being interviewed on the radio about her support for a version of this bill offered in Illinois (and opposed by Senator Barack Obama). The interviews elicited calls from nurses all over the country. The nurses testified that these kinds of abortions had been practiced at their hospitals for years. The procedure turned out to be far more common than we had ever imagined. Jill Stanek had one of her aides call the Oak Lawn hospital to find out how they could continue their practice of live-birth abortions in the face of the Born-Alive Infants' Protection Act. A spokesman for the hospital professed not to have heard of the Act.

Not heard of it? There had been a meeting at the White House in spring of 2003 at which it was agreed that the first thing to do was to inform the country's hospitals and clinics that the Act was now law in the United States. For the sake of making the Act a "teaching" Act—one designed, above all, to plant premises—no penalties had been specified in the bill. All of that could wait until a later moment. In the meantime, though, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tommy Thompson, could issue a directive to every hospital and clinic that came to the attention of the government. He could inform these institutions of the new law and ask them whether anything resembling a "live-birth abortion" was being practiced under their auspices. No hospital or clinic, of course, would admit that it was permitting these procedures, but the point would have been made. And even though the bill contained no penalties, criminal or civil, the very posing of

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the question to people in charge of hospitals and clinics was, as one lawyer said, a move that would "tighten sphincter muscles" within these circles. For the administrators would be forced to wonder about the consequences of violating federal law. Would it lead to the loss of federal funds or of tax exemptions?

President Bush described the bill as a "first step in changing the culture." And yet, at the time of this writing, the Department of Health and Human Services has not yet taken even the most modest second step: to make the law known in the places where abortions are performed.

But why should the President have been so reluctant to speak on a measure so modest that it commands almost universal support across party lines? After all, during the presidential campaign he was willing to affirm publicly his support for the bill that banned "partial-birth abortion." In that grisly procedure, about 70 percent of the body of a living child is dangling from the birth canal; the head of the child is punctured, the brains suctioned out; and the dead child is removed intact. The bill banning the procedure was supported widely throughout the country, but Bill Clinton managed to get away with vetoing it twice, and the Supreme Court struck down the comparable bills that were passed in the states. This, then, was a matter of considerable controversy. And yet President Bush was willing to endorse the bill on partial-birth abortion. He signed it in a public ceremony when the bill was finally passed in 2004. Why was he willing to speak in support of this bill when he had been unwilling to endorse the Born-Alive Infants' Protection Act?

The most economical answer may be the most plausible: the bill on partial-birth abortion had already been taken up by Republicans in Congress and passed twice. For President Bush to take no notice of that bill and offer no endorsement would have been an omission too glaring to go unnoticed. But for President Bush to talk about something new, a measure that had come as a surprise, even a disarming surprise, to many Republicans otherwise favorable to abortion—well, that would betray a willingness to *talk* about abortion. And in the President's world, a willingness to talk about abortion is seen as tacky and unseemly. One recalls Robert P. George's deft line about the first President Bush—that when it came to pro-life issues, he was "all action and no talk." But what we needed was the talk: talk that frames the issue, plants premises, and opens the conversation.

By the time President Bush signed the bill on partial-birth abortion, it had all of the earmarks of a "planned failure," a bill not likely to go into effect or make any impression on our laws. It was understood that the bill would be challenged in the courts on the day that it was passed. The same doctors who had claimed to be "chilled" by the bills on partial-birth abortion within the states would claim to be chilled by the same bill passed as a federal law. They would go into the same federal court, before the same friendly federal judge, and elicit the same result. That, in fact, is what they did, and the government was enjoined from enforcing the new law. President Bush's Department of Justice is preparing to defend the bill, and the appeals are wending their way through the courts even now. If there is no change on the Supreme Court by the time the act arrives there on appeal, we can expect that the same group of judges who struck down the act in Nebraska will strike down the new federal law. If that occurs, it is virtually inconceivable that even a Republican Congress would try to pass the same bill for a fourth time, or that the administration would draw down any political capital in order to rescue the new law. In that case, President Bush would never have to speak about partial-birth abortion again.

All of this has been evident for two years now, as people in the White House know. And yet the problems afflicting the bill on partial-birth abortion have opened up new paths to the President, and not all of them would require either new legislation or executive orders. While the bill on partial-birth is blocked in the courts, attention may be drawn back, yet again, to that "most modest" measure of all. The law that protects the lives of children who survive abortion could still be the most powerful tool for a pro-life administration—if only the President had any interest in making use of it. The tool could be used in the following way.

First, the President could express his "disappointment," as he has said, that the courts have enjoined this measure to end the gruesome practice of partial-birth abortion. But in the meantime, while we are deadlocked over partial-birth abortion, the President could turn the nation's attention to the measure that inspired no dissent. Senators and Congressmen of both parties joined together in passing the Born-Alive Infants' Protection Act, and no one has claimed that the Act is unconstitutional. But we never provided penalties for withholding medical care from a child who survives an abortion. If we are serious about condemning the procedure, we must be serious about making sure there is a punishment for it. The President could invite the judiciary committees of the Congress to hold hearings in order to consider what the penalties ought to be. How serious would it be, after all, to withdraw life-saving care from a newborn? But let us take an even more moderate approach: instead of assigning criminal penalties in the form of jail, or civil penalties in the form of substantial fines, the President could simply propose withholding

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funds from any hospital or clinic that allows the children who survive abortion to die.

Even on the matter of partial-birth abortion, what the courts have blocked is the bill that bans the procedure. Even if we cannot yet forbid the procedure, there is no obligation on the part of the government to make us accomplices in it by committing us, through our taxes, to its funding. As the courts have held, the right to abortion may describe a private liberty, but there is no right to public funding of these private choices. If they are private, let them remain private. If even the father has no standing in the decision to abort a child, then surely the public does not have an "interest" that should make us part of a private decision to end a human life.

The President could then pose one more question: What is a "recipient of federal funds"? Or more pointedly: Would the formulas of the Civil Rights Laws apply here, especially the formulas that became settled after the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988? If a student at a private college receives a loan from the federal government, the whole college is now considered a recipient of federal aid, and all relevant regulations of the federal government bear on all parts of the college. The President might simply put this question to the committees of Congress: If any patient, in a clinic or a hospital, is covered by Medicare—or receives a loan from the Veterans' Administration or a check from Social Security—does the whole facility become a recipient of federal aid?

Faced with this challenge, how can the partisans of abortion respond? Would they object to this approach of letting the federal government effectively legislate by the familiar device of withholding federal funds? Or would they now call into serious challenge the whole scheme of "legislating by indirection"? Would they wish, then, to dismantle the very structure by which federal authority has been expanded over the past forty years to further the liberal agenda? If so, we would willingly help them. For the administration, this would be a win-win proposition. Whatever was done to resist this measure would also undercut the constitutional scheme for enacting liberal mores into law. Yet when the issue of abortion is added to the mix, the Democrats could hardly fail to reconsider their attachment to this scheme: to acquiesce in this measure would be to accept the authority of Congress to legislate in the field of abortion without really legislating. If Congress can withhold funding for live-birth abortions or partial-birth abortions, then Congress could also withdraw funding for abortions late in term or after "viability," or for abortions performed because the child may be afflicted with medical problems. Thus, the party of abortion could not help but resist, but its resistance would set off crippling tensions within the Democratic Party.

Some of these pro-life measures might require new legislation—as in settling on the penalties for live-birth abortions or withholding funding from those institutions that perform them. But the most pronounced effect would come through the questions that these measures would raise—if the President was willing to raise them. The questions are intended to advance the public argument, but they could also be directed to committees in Congress, to the Attorney General—or even to the Commissioner for Internal Revenue.

As it turns out, one of the most powerful levers is the one that was used so effectively twenty years ago to beat up on Bob Jones University. In a case that drew national attention, this fundamentalist school was denied tax exemption under federal law because its internal rules barred dating and marriage across racial lines. The Supreme Court held that the university lost its claim to exemption because it was in violation of the "public policy" of the United States. But no student had been denied admission to the university or any of its programs on the basis of race. The university was comparable to a private association composed of people of different races who preferred to keep their dating and marriage within racial lines. And strictly speaking, there was no public policy of the United States—no statute or executive order—that barred people from discriminating on the basis of race in their private choice of a date or spouse. By dramatic contrast, there is indeed now a statute of the United States, duly enacted, that explicitly forbids the withholding of medical treatment from a child who survives an abortion.

In the end, there may be no need to extract a decision from the IRS: it may be sufficient to alert the likes of Christ Hospital that any facility that performs "live-birth abortions" is in violation of federal law. And while there are no criminal or civil penalties, any such institution could lose its tax exemption. The brute fact is that every hospital receives some kind of federal aid, and virtually all of them depend in one way or another on tax exemptions. Merely to make the matter known—even without an executive order—is a move likely to stir up discussion and, eventually, to change hospital policies in such a way as to make the practice of abortion less common.

From different parts of the country have now come reports of "induced-labor abortions"—the equivalent of the "live-birth abortion," in which a child is delivered and then put aside to die. In New Jersey, Richard Collier, a pro-life lawyer, took a deposition in April 2004 on a child being "terminated" in this way because it was

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afflicted with "abnormal limbs." Collier relayed his records to the Department of Justice. The case seemed to offer a clear test of the Born Alive Infants' Protection Act, but for the past year lawyers pondered whether the case offered a violation of civil rights, falling to the Department of Justice, or whether it should be pursued by the Department of Health and Human Services. And then there was also some hesitation in taking the lead in an administration that did not wish to take leads in such matters. And so the word went out: it would be helpful if people outside the government expressed an interest in enforcing the law. Only now, as this article goes to press in mid-February, has the Department of Justice finally acted on Collier's case. A complaint was filed, under the Born-Alive Infants' Protection Act, against the hospital in Morristown, New Jersey, in which the live-birth abortion had taken place.

That such an action should occur at all must be credited to young, pro-life lawyers put in their positions by the Bush administration. Yet one might well ask: In a pro-life administration, why was it necessary for the impetus to come from outside—from members of the Senate or from private entities? Why did it not come from within the executive branch itself, and from the man charged with the "faithful execution of the laws"? And why has it been taken as a given that a pro-life White House is the chief source of drag, the main barrier that must be overcome before pro-life lawyers are free to enforce pro-life laws?

Hence the paradox that afflicts us now: we have the most pro-life administration that has ever been assembled, and at the head of that administration is a good, sympathetic man, who is deeply reluctant to make the pro-life argument in public or to start the kind of discussion that might bring about real change. It has been suggested that the leadership for pro-life initiatives must emanate from the Congress. And from the Congress, in the next year, the measures I've outlined may indeed come forth. But if this President's second term is anything like his first, we can expect that Congressional Republicans will receive little help from the top of the administration. This state of affairs leads to the following melancholy judgment. For pro-lifers Mr. Bush must be counted as a real friend. But by his example, he is establishing what must surely stand as the most corrosive lesson that could be taught in this country right now—that in the judgment of an accomplished political man, it is either impolitic or unrespectable to make the pro-life argument in public. Whatever else may be accomplished by the Bush administration, this implicit teaching can have only debilitating and destructive effects on the pro-life cause.

We will not have long to wait to see the effects of these lessons. They are already playing a part in arguments over who should succeed President Bush and what the Republican Party will look like in the future. The pundits have been quick to point out that many of the "stars" in the Republican Party—Giuliani, Schwarzenegger, Pataki—are "pro-choice." The pundits insist that pro-lifers had better come to terms with that fact. They should be willing to settle for pro-life gestures—say, an emphasis on adoption—instead of insisting on measures that would actually restrict the practice of abortion. But in all of this there is a curious inversion. Jesse Jackson and Richard Gephardt had been committed to pro-life positions in the years immediately after *Roe v. Wade*, yet when they sought to compete for the presidential nomination in the Democratic Party they were compelled to "grow," as they say, by becoming pro-choice. It is curious that there is no comparable expectation on the Republican side. Pro-choice Republicans hoping to rise in a pro-life party are not expected to "grow" by becoming more pro-life, by at least looking for parts of a pro-life program they could incorporate in their own policy proposals. After all, the pro-life community has put forth moderate proposals, beginning with the move to protect children who survive abortions. Almost 70 percent of the public supports the ban on partial-birth abortions, and it figures that even more would support a move to withhold federal funds from hospitals and clinics that perform either that surgery or live-birth abortions. If these measures are acceptable to most Americans, why should they not be acceptable to the Giulianis and Schwarzeneggers? Is it not time for the so-called moderates to give some evidence of their moderation?

The future of the pro-life movement need not depend on chance, or even the next presidential campaign. It is now in the hands of President Bush. By taking small steps over the next several months, he could insure that the Giulianis and Patakis will have to make their way within the framework of a deeply pro-life party committed to measures that are both clear in principle and gentle in application. All of this is possible precisely because of the campaign that President Bush waged and the career he has crafted for himself. But where he was overly cautious before, there is no need for caution now. He has generated his own political capital, and he is now uniquely placed to expend it. Happily, these measures, so modest in scale, would be virtually costless to him, while they would inevitably stir up conflict within the ranks of his adversaries. What prospect could be more tempting? And what end, in political life, more worthy of the art? FT

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Easter Morning

for René Girard

Quick as dawn, the dogwoods have raised
improbable awnings, christened with rain.
Thrusts of witch-hazel, stands of rue,
and there—*there*, across the stream,
in the shade of those dark-lichened rocks—
white phlox and geranium strain
to reach the angled light. One bright
morning, a clean April day,
amazes familiar paths with a green
tangle and baizes the winter's stain.

Faster each Easter, my daughter flies
past tumbled mounds where brambles grow.
The bloodroots flower near her feet
as delicate as bible leaves,
and slow, persistent ivy kindles
on old trees. The year will know
a fresh redemption: burning green,
the greenwood glows—till ash
and thorn fall back to sleep,
counterpaned again with snow.

Beneath such trees, with hand and knife,
cold priests once tried to wake the leaf,
the root, the branch—the frozen world
that needs warm life for spring.
A lamb, a child: the shrouds of snow
would melt in their fresh blood—as grief
by grief, pain revenged by pain,
we paid the sacrificial debt
that swells with each repaying death.
And where shall we look for love's relief?

My daughter runs by the brief flowers:
touch-me-nots among the stones,
bluebells and sorrels, solomon's seal.
Every spring pretends a pity
for pretty, short-lived things.
Last night I watched the fire zones,
the bombing plumes, the tracer rounds:
blooms of war on the TV news.
And now in these green trees I see
the graves of gods and a grove of bones.

History labors, a worn machine
sick with torsion, ill-meshed,
and every repair of an old fault
ruptures something new. The sacred
knife and prey are gone from the woods,
but winter's blood still springs refreshed
and an altered world still summons death.
As long as we endure ourselves,
innocence will come to grief
and mercy must remain unfleshed.

The parish bells begin their carols,
down through the trees like flourished prayer
the Easter call resounding. Time
reaches forward, hungry for winter,
and what will save my daughter when even
hope is caught in the ancient snare?
A cold fear waits—till all that had fallen,
all that was lost, rudely broken,
crossed in love, comes rising, *rising*,
on the breath of the new spring air.

Joseph Bottum

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The Bishops in Council

Timothy M. Dolan

Twenty-five years ago this month, Pope John Paul II made his first pastoral visit to the United States, meeting the American bishops in Chicago. In his address to them, the former university professor used a style that was both innovative and pedagogically effective: he quoted from an array of documents and pastoral letters that the American bishops had issued on spiritual, moral, and pastoral matters; he affirmed their teaching and challenged them to continue and strengthen it; and, in the process, he shrewdly gave a papal benediction to the genius of the American hierarchy for working collegially, collaboratively, and in concert. It was as if the Successor of St. Peter was nodding in agreement with the observation of James Hennessy, S.J., that "the bishops of the Catholic Church in the United States have perhaps the proudest conciliar tradition in the Church universal."

My purpose is to look at the history of this tradition, and I begin with two caveats. First, in no way do I mean to imply that other national hierarchies lack a similarly collegial tradition. Prelates in France, Poland, and Spain, just to name a few, had been meeting in canonically approbated assemblies long before the *Ark* and the *Dove* brought Catholics to Maryland in 1634. While our legacy of national episcopal collegiality might be particularly consistent, effective, and exemplary, it is in no way unique.

Second, I admit that the word "conciliarism" is loaded. In applauding the distinguished heritage of American hierarchical "conciliarism," I do not mean what Brian Tierney has defined as a "catchword for theories asserting that a council is superior to a pope," an idea that reached its peak at the Council of Constance in 1418, reappeared in the Febronian and Gallican movements, and was soundly condemned as heretical by pontiffs beginning with Pius II (1458-64), and by both Vatican councils. On the contrary, I use the term "conciliarism" to mean not a theological movement but a style of ecclesiastical polity in which bishops find it helpful and effective to exercise their apostolic office as a group, and not only as individual diocesan bishops.

The American conciliar tradition antedates even the establishment of the diocese of Baltimore, our premier see, in 1789. Father John Carroll invited his fellow Jesuits (actually, they were "former" Jesuits, the Society of Jesus having been suppressed in 1773) to three organizational meetings at Whitemarsh, Maryland in 1783, 1786, and 1789. These were collaborative assemblies of two-dozen or so clergy who discussed such matters as property, education, priestly formation, and eventually, the need for a bishop and a diocese.

As his biographer, Annabelle Melville, has observed, John Carroll was an amazingly talented, pragmatic, perceptive, and reluctant leader. What qualified him to assume a role of leadership in the nascent American Church was not only his name—belonging as he did to the most prominent, influential, wealthy, and impeccably patriotic Catholic family in the country—and not only his innate organizational abilities, but also his gritty pragmatism. Carroll realized that the developing situation in the new nation called for a Catholic Church with some homegrown characteristics. The American

TIMOTHY M. DOLAN *is Archbishop of Milwaukee.* *This essay is adapted from the eighteenth annual Erasmus Lecture of the Institute on Religion and Public Life, which was delivered in New York City on October 25, 2004.*

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Church needed some distance from Europe, and it would need to get its act together if it were to survive and prosper.

It was very soon after his consecration as the first American bishop in 1790 that John Carroll again summoned his clergy—this time not to a voluntary organizational assembly, but to a canonical diocesan synod at St. Peter's pro-Cathedral in Baltimore, from the seventh to the tenth of November 1791. The twenty-two priests at the meeting spoke of the dangers of mixed marriages, the Easter duty, the disposition of parish funds, priestly vocations, and the religious education of children—themes that would be discussed time and again at similar gatherings over the next two centuries.

In 1808, Pope Pius VII made Baltimore an archdiocese, with suffragan bishops in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Bardstown, Kentucky. Three of the four new bishops were consecrated by Archbishop Carroll in the fall of 1810, and there followed two weeks of meetings in what was an unofficial provincial council. Among the resolutions was a request to the Holy See that future episcopal nominations be made by the U.S. hierarchy, not by European prelates.

As important as Carroll was to the formation of the American hierarchy, it was John England—a priest of Cork, Ireland, appointed first bishop of Charleston in 1820—who must be considered the real father of the conciliar tradition in the United States. According to his biographer Peter Guilday, England urged his fellow bishops to hold regular councils for three reasons: like John Carroll, he felt that the pastoral challenges of the Church in America demanded regular, formal meetings; he believed councils would show an often anti-Catholic culture that the Church was not the backward, secretive, undemocratic, and foreign-controlled institution it was assumed to be; and he considered Carroll a failure who needed to be prodded by initiatives from his fellow bishops.

England would have to wait until October 1829 for the First Provincial Council of Baltimore. Among the many topics addressed at this first council were trusteeism (the popular belief among some American Catholic laity that they had the right to hire and fire their pastors), clergy discipline (including dress, behavior, residence, and pay), and the need for a catechism.

Over the next seventy-five years, the American hierarchy would hold seven provincial councils and three plenary councils (with provincial councils and diocesan synods following each of the three plenary councils). The results and benefits of the tradition were clear. The bishops had developed cohesion based on a collegial structure and unity in governance. Consistent discipline and stable Church life had been established. Bonds with Rome had been strengthened, as the Holy See summoned the meetings, suggested agenda, and approved conciliar decrees. (Contrary to popular perception, Rome encouraged, even demanded, the American conciliar movement.) American society on the whole was impressed by the initiative and organization of the hierarchy and its openness to the democratic style of self-governance. And pastoral problems had been identified and confronted.

With the conclusion of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884, a new pattern of conciliar style would develop and remain in effect until World War I—namely, an annual fall meeting of all the archbishops of the country. While the councils of Baltimore had worked well, they were by their very nature extraordinary (summoned as they were by Rome) and rather cumbersome in preparation and execution. The yearly meetings, by contrast, were to build on the assemblies that each province would hold before and, if necessary, after each meeting of the archbishops.

The annual meetings of the archbishops from 1884 to 1917 dealt with a host of controversial issues—the imperative of parochial schools, the temperance movement, ethnic tensions, the whole question of what has been called "Americanism" (the so-called "phantom heresy" condemned by Pope Leo XIII). It is accurate to say that the American bishops through the end of World War I were overwhelmingly concerned with internal, pastoral matters of the Church. They did not see themselves as prophetic voices challenging society or culture, and they were scrupulous to avoid the impression of "meddling" in national political affairs. The bishops more or less viewed their national role as the one defined by John Carroll: to provide structure, organization, cohesion, and discipline to the internal life of the Catholic Church in America. In other words, they saw themselves as pastors dealing with *ad intra* issues (that is, issues internal to the Church): marriage and family, religious education, training and uprightness of the clergy, the question of new dioceses and the nomination of occupants for those sees, the proper celebration of the sacraments, and warning their flocks of dangers to the faith posed by the American setting, including mixed marriages, alcohol, religious indifference, and avarice.

The *ad intra* style of conciliarism made considerable sense at the time. The bishops had to devote their time to establishing parishes, promoting vocations, schools, hospitals, orphanages, and orders of women religious, erecting new dioceses, and assuring financial stability, not to mention welcoming thousands of immigrants to the country every day. There simply was no time to concentrate on political issues.

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Another reason why the bishops focused on internal matters for so long was the ever-present danger of anti-Catholicism in American life. Long before Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., the bishops of the nineteenth century knew that this animus was "the deepest bias in American culture." They did not want to draw attention to themselves and were forever sensitive to the charge that the Catholic Church would try to overthrow the First Amendment and "establish" itself in the United States.

Probably the most dramatic example of reticence with regard to *ad extra* issues (that is, issues external to the Church) was the timidity of the bishops when confronted by the issue of slavery. As Peter Guilday, the historian of the Baltimore councils, has observed about the meeting of the national hierarchy in 1852:

> To the outsider, there was an added interest. Between 1844 and 1852, the Protestant Churches were splitting up into denominational and territorial divisions. The Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches were losing their unity over the abolition problem—a unity never since recaptured; and, with every social and religious institution in the nation straining and breaking under the dead weight of the slavery agitation, it was inevitable that to thousands of well-meaning men and women in the land, the question would arise: What action would the Catholic Church take in this crisis?

The answer, unfortunately, was None. Whether their silence was an act of prudence (as Guilday himself proposes) or one of cowardice is still being debated, but it is unquestionably a vivid example of the extreme reluctance of the nineteenth-century American hierarchy to pronounce on political affairs.

The American conciliar tradition would be dramatically expanded, and its focus shifted, during World War I. The main force behind the change was the Paulist editor of the *Catholic World*, John Burke, who had long argued for a national outlook and sense of unity among the country's Catholics. Douglas Slawson, an historian of the formative years of the bishops conference, points out that the hierarchy was eager to show its enthusiastic support for the war effort. With the approval of the unofficial primate, Cardinal James Gibbons, Burke invited Catholic leaders to Washington in August 1917 to discuss Catholic support of the war, and the turnout was impressive. By the conclusion of the meeting, the National Catholic War Council had been formed. Its duties would include the promotion of Catholic participation in the war, through chaplains, literature, and care for the morale of the troops, as well as (for the first time) lobbying for Catholic interests in the nation's capital.

When the entire hierarchy gathered at the Catholic University of America in February 1919 for a delayed celebration of the golden jubilee of Cardinal Gibbons' episcopal consecration, they heard the legate of Pope Benedict XV, Archbishop Bonaventura Cerretti, challenge the bishops to be especially attentive to issues of education and social justice in the postwar years. That's all that avid conciliarists such as Bishops Joseph Schrembs and Peter Muldoon needed to hear. Inspired by the challenge, they made two proposals: an annual meeting of all the bishops every fall in Washington, and a permanent administrative body in the nation's capital to promote Catholic interests on behalf of the hierarchy. Over the protests of Cardinal O'Connell of Boston and Archbishop Messmer of Milwaukee, the bishops approved the foundation of the National Catholic Welfare Council (NCWC) in September 1919. The NCWC institutionalized the American conciliar tradition, giving it a permanent bureaucracy. John Burke was appointed general secretary and five departments came into being: education, social action, laity, press, and missions.

Just how muscular the spirit of conciliarism now was would become clear two years later. Cardinal O'Connell, joined by Charles McDonald of Brooklyn, protested to the Holy See that the new NCWC smacked of Gallicanism and encroached upon the independence of the diocesan bishop. Rome, especially Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val, an old friend of O'Connell's, gave them a favorable hearing, and the Consistorial Congregation (the predecessor of today's Congregation for Bishops) suddenly suppressed the NCWC.

This move would trigger what Elizabeth McKeown has termed "the most forceful protest to Rome in American Catholic history." In two documents sent to Rome, the officers of the NCWC—Edward Hanna of San Francisco, Peter Muldoon of Rockford, Illinois, Austin Dowling of St. Paul, and Joseph Schrembs of Toledo—argued that a national structure of bishops was crucial and that, if the suppression of the council stood, the credibility of the bishops would suffer, the Holy See would look autocratic (thus vindicating Protestant and Masonic critics), and national Catholic unity would be ruptured. "Not to be nationally organized in Washington is to be without power in public life," the bishops cautioned Rome, reminding the new pontiff, Pius XI, that America was now a world power, and that the bishops needed a voice in the capital.

In the end, the conciliarists won. Rome cancelled the suppression, although Cardinal Gaetano de Lai noted that he feared the power of such a large episcopate, with

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a huge budget, and a permanent bureaucracy. To save face, Rome did insist that the word "council" be changed to "conference"—making NCWC stand for the National Catholic Welfare Conference—so that it would be clear that participation was only voluntary, and that the *acta* of the meetings would not have the force of law until they were approved by the Apostolic See.

It is this structure, more or less, that functions to this day as the vehicle of the collegial tradition of the American hierarchy. Francis Hurley would later observe that the NCWC was a resounding success as an example of structured collegiality, that it was the natural fulfillment of the vision of the episcopal collaboration dreamed of by John Carroll and John England, that it was vindicated at Vatican II, and that it serves as the model for other national hierarchies.

Be that as it may, it is clear that with the NCWC the bishops of the United States showed that they had lost their shyness and were willing and eager to begin focusing on *ad extra* concerns. If anyone had any doubts as to what direction the new structure would take, the matter was settled on Lincoln's Birthday in 1919 with the publication of what was called the *Bishops Program of Social Reconstruction*, produced by the Social Action Department of the NCWC. This department was chaired by the moral theologian and social activist Monsignor John A. Ryan, who would later serve as unofficial chaplain to the New Deal. The *Bishops Program*, as Joseph McShane, S.J., reminds us, placed the bishops clearly on the side of Progressives in such matters as housing, minimum wage, social security, welfare, and unions. Apparently, the bishops were no longer hesitant to take controversial positions, and, unlike in 1852, silence on political issues was no longer considered a virtue.

The bishops found their voice, expressed through the NCWC, in other areas as well. They spoke often and firmly in defense of the persecuted Church in Mexico, warned of dangerous excesses in Germany and Italy in the 1930s, and, after the Second World War, consistently condemned communism. They engaged in a vigorous campaign to overthrow the overtly bigoted Oregon School Law and joined with the Knights of Columbus in opposing the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. In issues of public morality, they could be counted upon regularly to warn against divorce, birth control, and lewdness in movies—the latter concern leading directly to their creation of the effective Legion of Decency. Their progressive social action agenda reached a crescendo in the New Deal years, when, led by Monsignor Ryan, they spoke on behalf of unions, government programs of relief and reform, and even backed the National Industrial Recovery Act. Their "Labor Schools" and "Schools of Social Action" became legendary for the training of lay activists and, through their Rural Life Bureau, the needs of the farmer were not forgotten.

It is not that the bishops now ignored *ad intra* concerns, but they did seem to discover and relish the fact that people took them seriously and looked to them for guidance on issues of the day. Their annual meetings increasingly became reports of what the different departments and committees of the NCWC had done in their name since the last general meeting.

With the Second Vatican Council came increasing international respect for the American conciliar tradition. According to historian Gerald Fogarty, the debate at the council between Cardinals Frings and Ottaviani—as well as the debate among four American cardinals about the authority that should be extended to national conferences (with Francis McIntyre and Francis Spellman opposed to strengthening them and Joseph Ritter and Albert Meyer in favor)—were pivotal in bringing a new schema, "On the Pastoral Office of Bishops," to the council floor. *Christus Dominus*, the council's decree on bishops, would specifically mandate that every country have an episcopal conference (§ 38). Although the American model was not specifically mentioned as a blueprint for what the council had in mind, the informal consensus seemed to be that in the NCWC the bishops of the United States possessed the paradigm for such conciliar governance.

Shortly after the conclusion of Vatican II, Paul Hallinan of Atlanta and John Dearden of Detroit took the initiative in transforming the NCWC into a dual organization: the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), which was the aggregate of all the bishops in the country, and a permanent bureaucracy in Washington, the United States Catholic Conference (USCC). The NCCB/USCC came into force in 1966, with Joseph Bernardine as general secretary.

For the next twenty years, the NCCB/USCC would sponsor two annual meetings a year of the entire hierarchy. These two decades were the heyday of American conciliarism, with the actions of the national conference considered normative for the dioceses of the country, and with the conference almost completely eclipsing the agenda of individual bishops. Developments that began in the days of the NCWC now became institutionalized. First and foremost, the conference became explicitly enthusiastic about *ad extra* concerns, setting itself up as a "prophetic voice" in American society, especially on domestic and international issues of social justice. War and peace, the economy, nuclear weapons, unemployment, labor issues, the environment, Central

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America, Africa—the conference eagerly issued statements on all of these complicated and controverted areas of public policy. At least partially as a result, the bureaucracy and budget of the NCCB/USCC mushroomed; before long, plans had to be made to construct a permanent facility near the campus of the Catholic University of America that would be five times the size of the conference's former offices on Massachusetts Avenue.

In these years the conference also became the American hierarchy's accepted and preferred way of working with the Holy See. As in the past, the Vatican expressed much satisfaction with the conference and the conciliar style of the Church in the United States. It thus trusted the NCCB/USCC on matters of liturgy, ecumenism, catechetics, and marriage and family—and for the most part it allowed the American bishops a significant degree of autonomy on episcopal nominations and diocesan boundaries. Far from viewing the conference as an "upstart," the Holy See tended to consider it as a good example of what the Second Vatican Council had in mind in mandating national episcopal conferences. The NCCB/USCC was viewed as the proper and preferred engine of implementing the spirit and letter of Vatican II, and individual diocesan bishops were expected to follow the conference's lead. Meanwhile, critics charged that the American bishops acted as if any problem in the Church or the world could be solved by the establishment of a committee, the issuance of a statement, and a national second collection.

It took more than two decades for the post-Vatican II honeymoon to come to an end. By the late 1980s, some prominent voices in American Catholic life began to wonder if the conference needed to be reigned in. Criticisms that had been heard from time to time began to become more frequent and pointed. The conference, it was said, was "staff-driven"; the bishops were mere spectators; the biannual meetings were more like political conventions than pastoral meetings; a "clique" of bishops dominated to the exclusion of others; theological leftists inevitably prevailed on everything from public policy to liturgy; the conference's support staff leaned even further to the left; vast sums of money seemed to disappear into an ever-expanding bureaucracy. Several bishops and Catholic leaders rose to defend the conference against these and other charges, but over time the criticism had its effect.

As the '80s came to an end, it was clear that the cultural and political atmosphere in the country had changed in several ways. First of all, the demographics of the American Catholic population had shifted, with strong Catholic support for Ronald Reagan showing that Catholics in America had become more affluent, more politically conservative, and less enthusiastic about classical conference positions such as support for New Deal and Great Society social programs. In the mind of some bishops, their own aggressive promotion of "lay leadership" in the years subsequent to Vatican II had backfired as a new generation of lay Catholics—including such writers as Michael Novak, William Simon, George Weigel, Mary Ann Glendon, Russell Shaw, and Ralph McInerny—began to act as "loyal opposition" to the conference.

Second, Pope John Paul II overshadowed the bishops of every country, including the United States. If one wanted to find out where the Church stood on a given issue, one hardly had to consult the bishops conference, since the Pope himself made the evening news more often than national prelates. This was a pontiff with a public vision, ubiquitous in his travels, indefatigable in meeting with his fellow bishops, tireless in issuing his own pastoral letters and statements, and enthusiastic about the conciliarism of world synods and extraordinary regional assemblies. John Paul himself would summon the archbishops of the United States to Rome to deliberate on the threats to life inherent in American culture. It was as if the Pope had stolen the thunder from conciliarists in America, doing for the Church universal what John England had set out to do for the Church in America. It was all the conference could do just to keep up with the Pope.

Third, among younger priests and bishops there was a shift toward a vibrant theological orthodoxy. While fully and enthusiastically committed to Vatican II, they longed for a return to *ad intra* issues as they worried about a loss of Catholic identity, moral laxity among lay Catholics, and generalized catechetical illiteracy. These so-called "John Paul II bishops" pointed to the threats American society posed to faithful Catholics, especially in the realms of marriage and family, chastity, and the sanctity of human life. Moreover, they seemed less willing to take their cues from the conference structure and more comfortable exercising local authority as bishops in their own dioceses.

There was an indication that the Apostolic See shared some of this unease about mega-conferences when, in 1998, Pope John Paul II issued *Apostolos Suos*, "On the Theological and Juridical Nature of Episcopal Conferences." While affirming the necessity and theological validity of bishops conferences, the pontiff also stated that "the growing extent of their activities has raised some questions of a theological and pastoral nature, especially with regard to their relationship to the individual diocesan bishops" (§ 6). It would be an exaggeration to say that this document was an attack on the American conciliar tradition, but

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it was a warning about the dangers of "excessive bureaucracy" and a firm reminder about a bishop's independent authority in his own diocese. As Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger noted, "Episcopal conferences do not constitute *per se* a doctrinal instance which is binding and superior to the authority of the bishops who constitute them." Even those who downplayed this document's importance had to admit that it was at least a "corrective" and that American episcopal conciliarism was entering a new era.

Regardless of these trends, the fact remains that the vast majority of American bishops still trust the conciliar spirit and style that has characterized their polity since John Carroll. Even bishops who may be critical of the current conference structure want to work within it to bring about reforms. What some interpreted as an "anti-conference" initiative—the call by 108 bishops in 2002 to consider the summoning of a fourth plenary council in the United States—showed by its very nature a dependence upon, and trust of, the conciliar tradition of the American hierarchy. The bishops appear to be moving toward a consensus that the conference can "clean its own house" and lead the reform and renewal necessitated by the current crisis in American Catholic life.

In the end, financial constraints might contribute more than anything else to limiting the power and influence of the USCCB (the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops—the conference's newest name, given in 2001, when the former two-tiered structure of the NCCB and the USCC was terminated). With "bankruptcy" now a word on the lips of not a few bishops, and with every diocese burdened by bills brought about by the sex-abuse scandal, the current conference structure certainly cannot expand and will probably have to be curtailed.

Bishops seem to sense that a return to the John Carroll–John England style of leadership might be in order. Above all, these patriarchs were concerned with *building* the Catholic Church in the United States. Bishops today increasingly ask whether it is now necessary to *rebuild* the Church in America, through reform and renewal. They wonder if we need to start internally, concentrating first on pastoral issues such as widespread catechetical illiteracy, the collapse of marriage and family life, the restoration of a "culture of life," genuine liturgical reform, a return to the sacrament of penance, a national commitment to obey the third commandment, and the promotion of authentic renewal in the lives of our priests and religious (as strongly suggested by the report of the National Review Board). Bishops today seem to prefer to do this prayerfully, patiently, and away from the blinding light of the media.

Of course, in today's cultural context, the distinction between *ad intra* and *ad extra* issues is murky at best. As we learned very well during the recent presidential campaign, even a matter of internal sacramental discipline such as one's worthiness to receive the Eucharist can have enormous public consequences.

However these issues are ultimately resolved, it is clear that the conciliar tradition of the American hierarchy is here to stay. Two recent documents from the Holy See—*Pastores Gregis*, the post-synod apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II, and the *Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops* from the Congregation for Bishops—vigorously affirm the value and necessity of national episcopal conferences while refining and clarifying their proper role. The prelates of this country feel that they need conciliarism, they know that they enjoy it, and they believe that it can be transformed to serve their purposes. All have ideas about how its authority can be better exercised, and the very nature of the collaborative style common to our national ecclesiastical polity since the 1780s will guarantee that current criticism is heeded. It's a long way from Whitemarsh, Maryland, to Washington, D.C., but the challenges posed by conciliarism remain remarkably the same. FT

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Max Weber Goes Global

Michael Novak

In the century since Max Weber published *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, the book has been subject to severe and sustained criticism, much of it justified. Yet reflecting on its thesis in the light of worldwide economic developments during the past several decades reveals that, for all of his errors, Weber grasped something crucially important about the spiritual wellsprings of capitalism—something that has been neglected by capitalism's radical critics no less than by many of its most enthusiastic champions.

As Weber began to contemplate a study of capitalism's emergence in the early modern world, he pondered a fact that many others, including Adam Smith, had noted before him—namely, that there are many areas of the world in which people—even dedicated, persistent, industrious people—tended to work only to a target they set for themselves, after which they stopped. Yet Weber also noticed that some groups were gripped by what he perceived as a new and different work ethic, such that they felt motivated to earn as much as they could and go constantly beyond their earlier gains. What accounted for this difference in values? As generations of readers are well aware, Weber concluded that a complex psychological dynamic—rooted in a Protestant (and specifically Calvinist) religious experience—leads certain individuals to perceive a duty to increase their store and better their condition.

Weber's critics have often complained that he radically misunderstood Reformed theology. They point out that for the crucial details of his thesis Weber relied not on creedal statements or formal treatises, but rather on the pastoral writings of such practical thinkers as Richard Baxter. Passages in the *Institutes* demonstrate that Calvin himself quite sincerely believed that the ultimate purpose of human life is not tireless devotion to an earthly calling, but rather faith in the revelation of Christ. Any suggestion of an innate affinity between Protestant theology and capitalism, they said, must therefore be dismissed.

Yet in finding fault with Weber's reading of Calvinism, these critics have frequently ended up misreading Weber himself. What Weber tries to demonstrate is not that the capitalist spirit was born of Calvinist theology purely and directly, but rather that it arose from psychological tensions that Calvinist theological commitments tended to trigger in the minds of believers, especially when those commitments were articulated in a pastoral setting. Consider the doctrine of predestination as Calvin elaborated it. For Calvin, the absolute sovereignty of God means that God not only foreknows, but actively wills the salvation of some and the damnation of others. When the sheer unmeritedness of the gift of friendship with God for all eternity was promulgated among ordinary people, those people became quite anxious over the state of their souls and began to seek signs by which they might reassure themselves. For Weber, the Calvinist doctrine of predestination issues in "a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness" and is thus responsible for enormous psychological suffering among the faithful.

As a result, Reformed ministers began to advise ordinary people to dedicate themselves to a calling as a way to overcome "normal" anxieties about their election. Even if such advice consisted solely of such words as "just continue being conscientious in your

MICHAEL NOVAK *holds the George Frederick Jewett Chair at the American Enterprise Institute.* *This paper is adapted from a lecture delivered at Cornell University and is published with the university's permission.*

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work, and do the best you can," it was quite enough to inspire a huge increase in economic industriousness. Here, then, is a classic and powerful instance of the Law of Unintended Consequences. A formal doctrine whose original intention was to remove all concern with works-righteousness ended up propelling its adherents towards an unprecedented, almost painful, obsession with works. And this totally unforeseen and negative psychological consequence had extremely beneficial economic effects—in fact, economically revolutionary effects.

Weber's account of capitalism is far from uniformly positive. Whereas others have emphasized the market's ability to create wealth and foster technological innovation, Weber understood capitalism primarily in terms of duty, asceticism, and self-denial—and he stressed its tendency to encourage instrumental calculations of cost and benefit, as well as to employ a purely formal mode of thinking and reason. Most ominously, once capitalism becomes divorced from its original religious impulses, it turns into "an iron cage" from which we are unable to extricate ourselves. The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we, by contrast, are forced to do so. The "inexorable power" of the capitalist ethic rests upon "mechanized foundations." Weber discerns in this atheistic, secular system a "mechanical petrification." He describes the fate of modern man in terms as bleak as those found in the writings of such poets as Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound. For Weber, modern capitalists are "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart."

Which raises an important question: Is Weber's outlook justified by the reality of life under capitalism? Or is it instead the result of his mistaking certain aspects of capitalism—aspects that ultimately derive from secularized Reformed Protestantism—for the capitalistic order as a whole? The Protestant ethic may issue in hard work, asceticism, and an always unsatisfied striving for material betterment, but doesn't capitalism also foster ingenuity and inventiveness? Put theologically, the Protestant ethic tends to emphasize conversion and change of life that can be wrought only by divine grace. An alternative but no less important ethic—one that can be described as a "Catholic" ethic—has historically worked to emphasize that, despite the wounds inflicted on creation by sin, the world retains marks of God's goodness. If Protestant striving has inspired economic dynamism, Catholic delight in the goodness of creation has, by comparison, encouraged economic creativity.

Weber was blind to this distinctly Catholic contribution to the development of capitalism because he erroneously assumed that the Benedictine ideal of worldly withdrawal remained the only mode of Catholic asceticism. Indeed, as early as the eleventh century, the regular canons of towns and villages throughout Europe began to adopt the Rule of St. Augustine and live the monastic life while ministering to growing urban populations. Western monasticism moved still closer to the life of the laity with Robert of Molesme and the establishment of the Order of Citeaux in 1098. As sociologist Randall Collins has shown, one of the primary causes of the great revival of European commerce in the twelfth century was the rise of Cistercian monasteries:

> These monasteries were the most economically effective units that had ever existed in Europe, and perhaps in the world, before that time. The community of monks typically operated a factory. There would be a complex of mills, usually hydraulically powered, for grinding corn as well as for other purposes. . . . The Cistercians were the cutting edge of medieval economic growth. They pioneered in machinery because of their continuing concern to find labor-saving devices. Their mills were not only used by the surrounding populace (at a fee) for grinding corn but were widely imitated. The spread of Cistercian monasteries around Europe was probably the catalyst for much other economic development, including imitation of their cut-throat investment practices.

And then there was the influence of the mendicants. The Dominicans and the Franciscans, in particular, introduced lay Catholics to the rhythms of apostolic life, taught them to cherish holiness in their daily work, and inspired them to perform that work perfectly for God. More, of course, could be said. The point is not to deny that the Protestant Reformation unleashed a special dynamic energy, but rather to note the crucial contribution of other religious and cultural influences to the development of the capitalist order, in its unique blend of dynamism and creativity.

Nowhere has this potent combination been more fully realized than in the United States. In unexpected ways, the distinctive experience of economic life in America falls as much within the Catholic view of things as it does within the Protestant outlook described so vividly by Weber. The joy of discovery, the delight in novelty, the love of risk and surprise, the frequently experienced disproportion between effort and reward—Alexis de Tocqueville points to all of these qualities in his dis-

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cussion of the United States. The typical American, Tocqueville observed,

> lives in a land of wonders; everything around him is in constant movement, and every movement seems an advance. Consequently, in his mind the idea of newness is closely linked with that of improvement. Nowhere does he see any limit placed by nature to human endeavor; in his eyes something which does not exist is just something that has not been tried yet.... Choose any American at random, and he should be a man with burning desires, enterprising, adventurous, and, above all, an innovator.

While Americans retain a strong notion of human imperfection and affirm the need for checks and balances—in other words, they hold to a nonutopian understanding of human nature—they also take an almost Catholic delight in the goodness and possibilities and wonders of creation. "Chance," Tocqueville notes, "is an element always present to the mind of those who live in the unstable conditions of a democracy, and in the end they come to love enterprises in which chance plays a part. This draws them to trade not only for the sake of promised gain, but also because they love the emotions it provides."

In such a tumultuous nation, marked by extraordinary social and economic fluidity, people began to understand—perhaps for the first time in human history—that poverty was not necessarily a natural condition. The age-old class structure—not to mention the seemingly inevitable premodern cycle of prosperity and economic decline—could be broken. And if such progress were possible in the United States, why not in other countries? The chains of poverty could be systematically broken—and if they *could* be broken, there was a moral imperative that they *must* be broken.

And so they were—first in the United States, and then slowly, progressively, around the world. Little by little, people began to understand that it need not be the case that "you always have the poor with you" (Matthew 26:11)—that it is a moral obligation of societies as well as individuals to overcome poverty. Whereas poverty had previously been taken to be the natural condition of most human beings everywhere, through the workings of capitalism it came to be considered as counter to nature, immoral, and the result of inadequate social planning and effort. In America, the process of moving up and out of poverty, generation by generation, came to be called fulfilling the "American dream."

Weber's Calvinists, but also Catholics in the cities of France and Northern Italy, as well as skeptics and freethinkers throughout Europe—all of them shared a strong spirit of enterprise and a talent for organization and practical execution. To put it in Weberian language, they participated in a new moral sensibility that longed to bring new worlds and new wealth into existence.

Many spiritual impulses fed this new sensibility, not only the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. One of them was the sense of new possibilities launched into history by the romantic stories emanating from the New World in America, South and North. The sheer newness of America fueled the European imagination; here was soil barely trod by human feet, full of wonders and untapped potential. Nobody describes this encounter better than Tocqueville:

> It was then that North America was discovered, as if God had held it in reserve and it had only just arisen above the waters of the flood. There, there are still, as on the first days of creation, rivers whose founts never run dry, green and watery solitudes, and limitless fields never yet turned by the ploughshare. In this condition it offers itself not to the isolated, ignorant, and barbarous man of the first ages, but to man who has already mastered the most important secrets of nature, united to his fellows, and taught by the experience of fifty centuries.

Upon such a stage, men might dare to dream the impossible. This continent opened new vistas, offering wholly new perspectives. It invited its inhabitants to participate in creation as they never had before, to delight in discovering the workings of nature. No less an authority than Abraham Lincoln saw this tendency among his countrymen:

> In anciently inhabited countries, the dust of ages—a real, downright old-fogyism—seems to settle upon and smother the intellects and energies of man. It is in this view that I have mentioned the discovery of America as an event greatly favoring and facilitating useful discoveries and inventions.

Columbus' achievement was, to Lincoln's mind, "most favorable—almost necessary—to the emancipation of thought, and the consequent advancement of civilization and the arts." It is this element of discovery—so natural, indeed so central, to the American experience—that is manifestly missing from Weber.

And yet, Weber's legacy is richer than this summary might lead one to believe. In the century since the publication of *The Protestant Ethic*, the world has seen more than a hundred nations undergo massive economic and political transforma-

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tions. Such transformations have put Weber's thesis to the test. Toward the end of the last century, in particular, several scholars were struck by the number of disparate nations in which something very much like a Weberian development seemed to be taking place: an enormous transformation of attitudes toward work and wealth, preceded or accompanied by a profound religious conversion. Scholars today have a wealth of data to collect and reflect upon from the "economic miracles" we have experienced since the end of World War II. Nation after nation, region after region, has entered upon a process of rapid economic growth and political transformation. Since 1980, in a story largely still untold, China and India have between them raised more than half a billion of their citizens out of poverty in their rapid adoption of economies of enterprise, relatively free markets, low taxation, and global trade. In a fascinating study of emerging globalization, former leftist Jagdish Bhagwati observes that in China poverty has declined "from an estimated 28 percent in 1978 to nine percent in 1998," while official Indian estimates report that "poverty fell from 51 percent in 1977-78 to 26 percent in 1999-2000."

Weber may have unnecessarily limited himself by focusing exclusively on the role of Calvinism in the emergence of capitalism; no doubt his thesis would benefit from a broader, more generalized restatement. Yet in our newly dynamic world, Weber's identification of necessary spiritual and moral conditions for successful economic activity continues to be a source of wisdom. Weber rightly teaches us that success in economics is largely dependent on the spiritual and moral qualities embodied in the practice of economic agents. Moral and spiritual flaws, in other words, have economic consequences. In economic transactions, a failure of insight, determination, perseverance, honesty, respect for law, or cooperativeness with one's fellows can be self-defeating. Even entire worldviews can be self-defeating—when, for instance, they employ supposedly divine taboos to stifle economic innovation or curtail economic growth. Max Weber was among the first thinkers to draw our attention to these crucial moral and spiritual dimensions of economic behavior—and for that reason his work remains as vital and important today as it was a century ago. FT

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How To Think About Zionism

Gary A. Anderson

Few movements are as difficult to understand as modern Zionism. In conversations with well-educated people, I often meet with great surprise when I inform them that Zionism began in the nineteenth century among secular Jews. They are even more surprised to learn that when the movement started nearly all religious Jews opposed any effort to establish a Jewish homeland. To be sure, the prayer book used on the Sabbath and festival days was chock-full of petitions for the day when God would gather His people from the four corners of the world and draw them to the land He holds so dear. But those prayers were all cast in highly theocentric terms. The end of the Diaspora was to be accomplished by the hands of the Holy One, not by mere mortals. And certainly not by mortals who had little or no interest in the life of the Torah as it was traditionally understood. Although many religious Jews became avid Zionists over the course of the last century, these tensions did not disappear. To this day, one still sees secular Israelis infuriated when one of the ultra-orthodox religious parties in their country is able to negotiate a large government subsidy for its religious schools and housing complexes while its members refuse to serve in the military.

Yet for all the controversy over the identity of the state of Israel, most Jews are in agreement that the state itself is worthy of constant support and prayer. Better to be an unhappy Jew in Israel than to be at the mercy of the country's Arab neighbors. The situation in the Christian West, however, is not so tolerant of what is sometimes dismissively called the "Zionist entity." Indeed, in recent months some mainline church bodies have called for an international effort to isolate Israel, and they routinely compare the Jewish state to apartheid South Africa. Given the political and theological significance of Zionism, we should expect and encourage an honest airing of different opinions. But one is struck by how few arguments about Zionism seem informed by any real theological knowledge. One is not surprised that secular journalists have been so flat-footed in this area, but the response of the mainline churches has been almost as bad. Few Western Christians seem willing or able to examine the theological challenge Zionism presents both to religious Jews and to Christians.

Any discussion of the modern Zionist movement must begin with the biblical claim that the land of Canaan was given by God to the people Israel. And any discussion of that claim leads back to the call of Abraham in Genesis 12 and its immediate literary context.

The first eleven chapters of Genesis depict a growing rebellion in the human community. Each story presents the reader with a new form of sin, and many such stories culminate in an act of dispersion. Adam and Eve are exiled to a place just east of Eden; Cain, in turn, must absent himself from the vicinity of Adam and Eve (a similar fate will greet the survivors of the flood); and the proud generation that set to work on the tower of Babel is dispersed across the face of the earth. All of humanity shares in the condition that would come to be Israel's special lot after the invasion of the Babylonians: exile. But there is one important difference: Israel remembers that she is in exile and prays for her exile to end, while the gentiles remain blissfully ignorant of their condition and its origins. (Christians have been allowed to share in this memo-

GARY A. ANDERSON *is Professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible at the University of Notre Dame.*

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ry; Latin hymnody, in particular, is full of references to the human race as the "exiled children of Eve.")

All seems to be lost until God addresses Abram, son of Terah: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves" (Genesis 12:1-3). In this striking message Abraham is called to leave all that he holds dear and set off for an unknown land. Through this paradigmatic migration God intends to rectify the created order that has spun so badly out of control.

It may be worth pausing for a moment on this audacious promise. In terms of the larger tableau of the Old Testament it is a promise that is both irrevocable and unfulfilled. It is irrevocable because it is a promise made by God. To this particular people (and to no other) God has tied His identity; to their fate His very nature is bound. As the apostle Paul puts it, the advantage of the Jews lies in the fact that "they were entrusted with the promises of God." Could their apostasy erase these promises? "By no means," Paul answers, "Let God be true though every man be false!" (Romans 3:2,4)

It is not so easy to see that this promise is also unfulfilled. Some would insist that it has been fulfilled. They would point out that much of the book of Joshua is devoted to showing precisely how the land promised to Abraham came under the control of the Israelite tribes. But to this it must be answered that the book of Joshua is not part of what the Jewish canon (and Jesus himself in the Gospels) identifies as "The Torah." At the end of this collection of five books, Moses and the Israelite tribes are still waiting to enter the promised land. "Moses went up from the steppes of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the summit of Pisgah, opposite Jericho, and the Lord showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali; the land of Ephraim and Manaaseh; the whole land of Judah as far as the Western Sea; the Negeb; and the Plain—the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar. And the Lord said to him, 'This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "I will assign it to your offspring." I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you shall not cross there'" (Deuteronomy 34:1-4). And so with the entire promised land in his sights, Moses breathes his last and the account of Israel's beginnings—Israel's Torah—comes to a close.

As many have noted, the very last words of the last book of the Jewish Bible end on a similar note. "Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: the Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all His people, may the Lord his God be with him! Let him go up" (II Chronicles 36:23). The similarity between the passage in Deuteronomy and this passage in II Chronicles cannot be accidental. The status of the Israelite people at the close of the biblical period is drawn into alignment with her founding charter. Israel is a people waiting just outside the land for the moment when God will bring it home.

Seen this way, the return to Zion represents the completion of the promise made to Abraham. For this reason, it does not belong in any solely anthropological category; it constitutes a true *opus Dei*, or "work of God." It is an eschatological event in the sense that it requires the push of the divine hand to set it in motion. And there is more. When the moment arrives and God finally vindicates the claims He has made on behalf of His chosen people, the righteousness He displays will resound to the ends of the earth. Through the choice of Abraham, all nations will find blessing. The prophet Isaiah is most clear on this point:

> It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us His ways and that we may walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:1-4)

How, then, are we to understand the modern state of Israel in light of the irrevocable promise made to Abraham that still awaits fulfillment? The Bible would seem to allow only one answer: the return to Zion is the beginning of the messianic era. And indeed many fundamentalist Christians have asserted precisely this. Because the modern state of Israel is an objective sign of the messianic end times, Christians should unite with their Jewish brothers and sisters and defend the modern state of Israel against its many adversaries. As if in

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reaction to this unyielding attitude, many thoughtful Christians err in the opposite direction. They approach the question of the Jewish state as a purely political affair, ignoring any sort of theological framework—or, even worse, they approach the state of Israel from the classical position of *adversus Judaeos* and so try to make Israel a pariah among the community of nations. The relationship of the Jewish people to the land of Palestine is thus viewed, even by many Christians, from an entirely secular perspective.

Here, then, is the central question I would like to consider: If we truly believe that God's promises to the Jewish people have not come to an end, and that those promises are linked inextricably to the land, what are we to make of the current return to Israel? We seem to be left in a quandary. It would appear that in order for Christians to sympathize with Zionism, they must believe that we now live in the shadow of the end times. But this is not the only way to read the biblical evidence. To get another perspective on the matter it would perhaps be useful to see how Judaism has struggled with the very same issue.

To the surprise of many Christians, a fair number of religious Jews are equally puzzled over how to assess the current resettlement of the land of Israel. And not a few Jews remain devout non-Zionists both in and outside of Israel. The grounds for their position are twofold. The first is the Bible's admonition to those who naïvely presume that it is their simple human right to live on this hallowed ground. According to Leviticus 18:24-30, the moral standards of the land are so high that it will vomit forth anyone who conducts himself improperly while living on it. This was the reason that the Canaanites were evicted from the land, and it is presumably a standing threat to anyone else who wants to settle there. Holiness has its privileges but it also comes loaded with important responsibilities. One thinks here of Shai Agnon's novel *Only Yesterday*. The protagonist of the story is a young, spirited Zionist named Isaac. On his boat ride to Israel he meets an older religious Jew who asks the young man where he is headed. When the older man learns that Isaac plans to move to Israel and participate in the resettling of the land, he breaks out in anger and reproaches Isaac for profaning the sacred bequest of Israel. Does he think the land of Israel is a land just like any other, a land to which you can simply migrate in hopes of attaining a better life?

The other reason for Jewish skepticism about the claims of Zionism comes from the biblical story of the spies sent to reconnoiter the land in preparation for the arrival of the Israelites. After the spies have returned and warned the people about the terrible dangers that will attend their march forward to take possession of the promised land, all Israel rises up in rebellion. "'If only we had died in the land of Egypt,'" they complain before Moses and Aaron, "'or if only we might die in this wilderness! Why is the Lord taking us to that land to fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be carried off! It would be better for us to go back to Egypt!' And they said to one another, 'Let us head back for Egypt'" (Numbers 14:2-4). After this rebellion God decrees that the entire generation is to die in the wilderness over the next forty years and only after a new generation has arisen will the promise of entering the land be fulfilled. But after Moses has conveyed this divine decree, a number of Israelites reconsider the matter and decide on their own to enter Canaan. Moses admonishes them sternly but to no avail. They defiantly march into the hill country of southern Canaan and are vigorously repelled: "And the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that hill country came down and dealt them a shattering blow at Hormah" (Numbers 14:45).

As the historian of Jewish thought Aviezer Ravitsky has shown in his book *Herut al ha-Luhot*, biblical texts like Leviticus 18 and Numbers 14 led many Jewish thinkers to express grave misgivings about returning prematurely to the land of Israel. In the thirteenth century Meir of Rothenberg declared, "Let him be abstinent in the Land and beware of any transgression, for if he sins there, he will be punished most severely. For God supervises the Land and watches over its inhabitants. He who rebels against the king from within the king's palace is not the same as he who rebels outside it. This is the meaning of 'a land that consumes its inhabitants' [Numbers 13:32]. As for those who go there and think they can get away with levity and reckless contentiousness, I would invoke the verses, 'But you came and defiled my land' [Jeremiah 2:7] and 'Who asked of you to trample my courts?' [Isaiah 1:12]" Still, such pointed reservations need to be set in proper historical context. Despite all his worries about the danger of return, Meir of Rothenberg made his own plans to settle in the land of Israel. Only his premature death prevented him from doing so.

How should we understand this ambivalence about the land of Israel? Certainly Ravitsky is correct when he remarks that the longer Jews remained in exile, the more they were in awe of the Holy Land. How, they wondered, could God's own land be a fit habitation for mere mortals? Indeed, for some Jewish thinkers a return to the promised land is so tied to moral and spiritual purity that the very nature of the human person would have to be transformed in order for the return to be safe—and even then it would have to come as the result not of

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human decision but of an explicit act of God, lest Jews repeat the sin of the spies by "hastening the end."

It would be hard to overestimate the historical importance of Jeremiah's dictum to those who suffered the first exile of 587 BC: "Seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its prosperity you shall prosper" (29:7). Indeed the *siddur,* or Jewish prayer book, honors the advice of Jeremiah by including a prayer on the Sabbath or festival day for the government of the country in which the local community of Jews resides. For all the spiritual attraction of the land of Israel, there were good scriptural reasons to wait patiently before "going up to Zion."

But the vagaries of human history have a way of jarring one loose from once-settled convictions. The God of the Bible is not some ethereal Gnostic spirit but a personal God covenanted to the people He chose. To slightly alter a biblical maxim, their ways are not inseparable from His ways. In the wake of the Holocaust, and of the stupendous victory of Israel's armed forces over its Arab neighbors in the Six-Day War of 1967, it seemed to many Jews that the traditional Jewish reservations about modern Zionism were in need of revision. God was again at work in this land on behalf of this people. The question now becomes how to conceptualize this work of God in light of biblical antecedents. Some secular Jews such as Michael Walzer have argued that the policy advocated by Jeremiah has been dramatically disconfirmed by the events of the twentieth century, and that, as a result, Jews should follow the example of the Israelite rebels of Saul's day who demanded a king in order to be like the rest of the nations (I Samuel 8).

Though not without its own internal rationale, such an explanation does not convince the religious. An act of rebellion in the Bible's day cannot become the inspiration for an act of obedience in ours. The question for the religious Jew—and, I would argue, for the sympathetic Christian observer as well—is whether the return to Zion can be articulated in a manner that is biblically and theologically compelling.

There is, I think, no better guide to this question than the Israeli biblical scholar Uriel Simon, who distinguishes between two sorts of claims a people can make on a land. One is a *natural* claim—a claim that the land in question belongs to a people because that is where they have dwelt for several generations, where they have raised their children, buried their ancestors, and created a distinctive local culture. The Jews, by contrast, claim a very different sort of connection to their land. Canaan is theirs not by dint of any set of conventional circumstances; it came to them as a gift from God. Israel's claim to the land is of a *supernatural* order.

As Simon notes, each sort of claim has its own advantages and disadvantages. A natural connection to one's land results from a history of *continuous* occupation, so that legal title to the land comes to be felt as a kind of natural right. In such a case, one may not even consider what would become of one's people if it lost its land, so complete is the identity between the people and its place. "The population feels an obligation to defend its land and its independence," Simon writes, "but in general it does not worry about being uprooted *in toto*. The danger of exile [is not perceived] as a real threat, nor does it impinge on their consciousness." But once such a connection is broken, it is broken forever: when, for example, the Hittites were driven from their land, their identity as a people came to an end.

Israel's supernatural claim to Canaan is not continuous in the same way, since its relationship to the land is marked by rupture. What God has given He can also take away, and on at least two occasions—the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC and 70 AD—Israel has been driven into exile. And yet, unlike the Hittites, the people of Israel have perdured. Wherever they are driven they remain unassimilated.

The fact that Israel has lasted two millennia without a homeland or any sort of native rule is miraculous. If we could go back in time and quiz those who lived in the ancient Near East about which people had the firmer claim to its land and which culture would most likely stand the test of time, they would more likely have chosen the Hittites than the Israelites. A natural connection to the land, supported by a large standing army, is far more impressive by worldly standards than the promissory note of a national god.

The first to note the peculiar fact of the perdurance of Jewish identity was Haman, the notorious anti-Semite in the book of Esther. In his advice to King Ahasuerus he declares, "There is a certain people, scattered and dispersed among the other peoples in all the provinces of your realm, whose laws are different from those of any other people and who do not obey the king's laws; and it is not in Your Majesty's interest to tolerate them. If it please Your Majesty, let an edict be drawn for their destruction, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the stewards for deposit in the royal treasury" (Esther 3:8-9). To be a people set apart has its attendant dangers. Augustine was also cognizant of this fact, though he regarded it in a more favorable light. That the Jews still survive in spite of their role in having God's messiah crucified is proof that God acts in accord with the teaching of the Gospels and continues to love His enemies. Though

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Augustine's position is considerably better than that of Haman, one still winces at the description of the Jews as "God's enemies." Yet what is important for our purposes is Augustine's historical observation that the Jewish identity has survived in spite of the Diaspora and in contrast to conventional historical patterns. This fact, Augustine argued, demanded a theological explanation.

The Catholic novelist and occasional philosopher Walker Percy comments on this fact in a far more sympathetic way. He argues that the Jewish people, as a people, point toward the reality of the God who has tied His identity to them:

> Where are the Hittites?
>
> Why does no one find it remarkable that in most world cities today there are Jews but not one single Hittite even though the Hittites had a great flourishing civilization while the Jews nearby were a weak and obscure people?
>
> When one meets a Jew in New York or New Orleans or Paris or Melbourne, it is remarkable that no one considers the event remarkable. What are they doing here? But it is even more remarkable to wonder, if there are Jews here, why are there not Hittites here?
>
> Where are the Hittites? Show me one Hittite in New York City.

It is worth noting how Percy's assessment of the matter overlaps with that of Simon. The Hittites, of course, had a natural connection to their land, a connection that would have been understood by them and their neighbors as enduring. Yet history has defied their expectations. Enter rapacious invaders from the east and west and whatever was left of a venerable Indo-European culture went into rapid decline. The Jews cannot possess their land without interruption until the end of days, but their identity as a people is a promise guaranteed by God. They have lost their land twice—and could lose it for a third time—but their identity remains, and will remain, intact by virtue of God's gracious hand.

Israel's claim to its land is to be distinguished from that of other peoples in another important way. The choice of Abraham and the people he would engender was not an end in itself. Rather, through that choice God sought to bring blessing to a troubled world. Through Abraham the nature of God's relationship to humanity was to be made known. Thus, when God was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for their flagrant wickedness, He decided to bring Abraham into His confidence, and the reason for this is important: "For I have singled him out that he may instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is just and right in order that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what He has promised him" (Genesis 18:19).

But God's dealing justly with the nations of the world is not something that Abraham learns about only by way of dialogue. His own life and the lives of many of his descendants will be witness to this principle in a far more concrete way. For God has bequeathed this land to Abraham's people on the surprising condition that they patiently wait hundreds of years before they actually take possession of it. "Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years." Why this surprising codicil to the promise? Because the wickedness of the Amorites, who were the current inhabitants of the land, had not yet reached its tipping point. God will not give this land away until its former occupants have relinquished their rights. So Israel's right to the land, though the result of a divine grant, is not without its restrictions. And the Torah warns that should Israel violate the rules incumbent upon those who would dwell in that land, it will be thrown out, just as the Amorites were. To be sure, God's promise to Israel is eternal, but this does not mean that Israel's presence in the land will be continuous and without interruption. Only in the messianic age, the Tanakh promises, will Israel's settlement in the land be secure and final.

Of course, God's promise to Israel is not to be understood as just a settling of accounts with the Amorites. Through His choice of Abraham, God makes known to the world the superabundance of His love and graciousness toward all creation. And the graciousness of God finds a fit recipient in the person of Abraham, who responds with unparalleled obedience. Abraham offers back to God that very part of his own being that he holds most dear: his beloved son Isaac. But even more important for the present discussion is another example of Abraham's generosity. In Genesis 13, just after Abraham has escaped from Egypt and brought great wealth back to the land of Canaan, he finds that his possessions and those of his nephew Lot are too numerous for the land to support. One option that lies well within Abraham's rights is to send Lot back to his home in Mesopotamia. But rather than do this, Abraham allows Lot to choose whatever portion of land he wishes. Lot immediately responds by choosing for himself the very best portion—a piece of land Scripture compares to Eden. (Of course, this land turns out to be in the territory of Sodom and Gomorrah, but only the reader is aware of this detail. At the time of

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Abraham's offer, the valley Lot chose was lush and attractive beyond measure, and neither Abraham nor Lot had any inkling of what fate lay before it.) The original beneficiary of the divine promise, Abraham concedes the very land that seemed most conducive to the fulfillment of that promise.

It is precisely at this point in the narrative, when Abraham shows himself willing to give up this choice territory, that God intervenes and rewards Abraham with explicit title to all the land that had been promised: "Raise your eyes and look out from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and to the west, for I give all the land that you see to you and your offspring forever. . . . Up, walk about the land, through its length and its breadth, for I give it to you." Whereas Lot had lifted up *his own eyes* (Genesis 13:10) in order to select the choicest land, it is *God* who lifts up Abraham's eyes (Genesis 13:14) to bestow upon him a far better portion. Whereas Lot is asked to look to the north and south to determine the land that would be his (Genesis 13:9), Abraham is instructed to cast his glance toward all four points of the compass (Genesis 13:14). The generosity of Abraham does not put the divine promise at risk; on the contrary, it becomes part of the fulfillment of that promise.

Where does this leave us with the Jewish claim to the land of Palestine? We need not agree with the Christian Zionists who insist that because this is the onset of the messianic era, anything Israel does in Palestine is part of its larger divine mandate. Even if we are witnesses to the beginning of the final messianic age—and this possibility can never be wholly dismissed—we should certainly expect that whatever God does with the Jews during this time will conform to the character of His relationship to this people as it is revealed in the Bible. A unilateral land-grab that takes no moral cognizance of the plight of Israel's neighbors is not consistent with Israel's foundational story.

Still, we must also insist that the promises of Scripture are indeed inviolable and that Israel's attachment to this land is underwritten by God's providential decree. The miraculous appearance of the Israeli state just after the darkest moment in Jewish history is hard to interpret outside of a theological framework. Certainly this is one reason (though not the only reason) why Islam has such difficulties with the modern state of Israel. The Jews are a protected people in the Koran but also a people who must know their place. Many Muslims believe that the Jews have gone far beyond their limited set of rights by possessing an independent state with authority over Muslim holy sites. Many Arab nations continue to draw maps of the Middle East in which the state of Israel does not even appear. But even worse is the silence of those mainline church bodies that ignore such blatant nonrecognition while loudly attacking Israel for its shortcomings.

Nevertheless, the acknowledgement of Israel's right to some form of sovereignty in Palestine leaves many pressing moral questions open. How is Israel to view the present moral quandary in which it finds itself? What is the relationship of Israeli Jews to the people with whom they dwell? The close of Uriel Simon's essay on the role of the Bible in modern Zionism is worth citing in full, since it presents us with a perspective that the Church could assent to:

> I believe that we are living in an era in which the divine promises are being enacted, a time in which God is extending assistance to his people, a time in which a portion of our biblical destiny is taking bodily form. This faith ought to instill in us patience, personal and spiritual trust, a readiness to assume great personal sacrifice, and above all this faith should support us in marshalling our energies for a fitting embodiment of this destiny. Along with this, it is incumbent upon us to take every precaution against "false messianism," from an advancement of the course of human history by dint of sheer human will and the refusal to distinguish between an era in which the ways of this (fallen) world still remain in force and the messianic age wherein the wolf shall lie down with the lamb. The failure to make precisely this distinction will occur when we convince ourselves that what we have has been promised from above and that our return to the land is indeed final. Precisely this sort of false confidence is liable to lead to our spoiling once more, [God] forbid, the great opportunity that has been given us. On the other hand, our hold on this land will grow stronger the more we remember that it has been given conditionally, that is, on the nature of our deeds. These deeds must include a zealous pursuit of peace.

For Simon, Israel's providential right to the land is secure. It is the subject of a divine promise. The nature of Israel's present return was unanticipated by many Jewish thinkers and posed a serious challenge to many thoughtful religious Jews. But then, so were the many horrors visited upon this chosen people in the twentieth century.

The return of the Jews to Israel has also posed a challenge to Christians. For ever since the days of Augustine, Israel's landlessness was commonly thought to be a punishment for the death of Christ. Events of the previous century showed us where this type of think-

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ing can lead. Happily, many thoughtful Christians have moved beyond this position. Certainly the visit of Pope John Paul II to the Holy Land—his walking the streets of the Jewish state and praying at the Western Wall—is a powerful expression of this. The question now is whether we can move from an attitude of toleration and acceptance to bold theological affirmation. Is the return to Zion part of God's providential design and eternal promise to His people Israel? I believe that it is. Is Israel's most recent return to this land final and permanent? No one can know for sure. That will depend, as Uriel Simon wisely argues, on the providential plan of our benevolent Creator and on the actions of Israel. FT

To My Grandfather

You sailed four times before you could
give up your native town for good
and the stone house that had withstood
floods and the ruinous quake.

Grandfather, whom I never knew,
dead when your son was only two,
how is it that I think of you
as he lies slowly dying?

Forgive me if I seem to rail
because the nurse's efforts fail,
and still my father cannot sail
after your distant wake.

Why do I count those chestnut trees
and see the shelves of cellared cheese,
while younger children climb your knees,
and the infant boy is trying?

You summoned the small ones: "*caro!* . . . *cara!*"
in Vermont and Cervinara
and they obeyed. To me, you are a
hero, tall and burly,

in a portrait of uncertain date.
I see my father hesitate.
Oh, do not let him stay too late
in the world you left too early.

Anthony Lombardy

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Books in Review

Covenant and Civility

FOR THE SAKE OF
HEAVEN AND EARTH:
THE NEW ENCOUNTER BETWEEN
JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY
By IRVING GREENBERG
Jewish Publications
Society of America
274 pp. $20 paper.

Reviewed by Alan Mittleman

THE TITLE OF Irving Greenberg's collection of essays—*For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter between Judaism and Christianity*—neatly captures the thrust of the book. Judaism and Christianity must rediscover and affirm one another for the sake of heaven *and* earth. Each religion is incomplete without the other. Each has been tempted by an excess of otherworldliness (heaven) or this-worldliness (earth), by universalism or tribalism, by the spirit or by the flesh. Judaism and Christianity need one another for balance, criticism, "holy envy," and a fuller perception of God's saving purposes. Only in loving partnership can they fulfill their conjoint destinies as God's strategies for the redemption of the world. These are remarkable assertions for a Jewish thinker raised in, and still in some ways associated with, Orthodox Judaism.

Greenberg's bold Jewish theological vision grew out of two encounters: with the Holocaust and with radical Christian theologians whose own framework was shattered by the Holocaust. Greenberg's encounter with the Holocaust, which began with intense study in the 1960s, led to a profound shaking of his Jewish faith. The son of a noted Orthodox rabbi and a product of the modern Orthodox social and educational system, Greenberg was almost defeated by the Holocaust's absolute devaluing of life. He did not know how to go on as a Jew until he met such Christians as Roy Eckhardt and Paul van Buren, who modeled for him both radical faith in God and critical fidelity to tradition. Their prophetic judgment on their own tradition's contribution to the teaching of contempt for Jews showed Greenberg that one can—and must—be both faithful and critical.

Just as these theologians demanded a fundamental reappraisal of Christianity's evaluation of Judaism, Greenberg, while affirming their program, makes a similar demand on the Jewish side: Jews must rise above their historic fear and dismissal of Christianity and affirm the full spiritual dignity of the Church. This entails more than Jewish tolerance; it requires Jews to affirm that the God

ALAN MITTLEMAN *is Professor of Jewish Thought at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City and Director of the Louis Finkelstein Institute on Religious and Social Studies.*

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of Israel has elected the Church to join gentiles to the people Israel. For Greenberg, this is not a matter of relativism or mere civil pluralism. It is a theological affirmation all the way down. Greenberg's work in this volume—the distillation of more than three decades of writing and dialogue—lays the conceptual and moral basis for this affirmation.

At bottom, Greenberg's theology rests on the conviction that the Holocaust was a revelatory event. It revealed God's presence as an apparent absence. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, neither Judaism nor Christianity can continue with business as usual, lest they betray this new revelation. Faced with the absolute evil of the Nazi attack, first on Jewish life and ultimately on human life *per se*, Greenberg was tempted to take Richard Rubenstein's approach and concede that the God of Israel was indeed dead. Instead, Greenberg came to a new understanding based on the biblical concept of covenant and the rabbinic concept of *hester panim*—God's hiding His face. In this view, Judaism is fundamentally about a divine-human partnership, a covenant, in which the divine partner increasingly cedes power and responsibility for creation to the human partner. The logic of covenant, progressively unveiled within the biblical process (compare, for example, Exodus with Esther), works toward the greater enfranchisement of the human for the sake of the redemption of creation. God's increasing withdrawal is not abandonment but empowerment. Greenberg thus provides a radical endorsement of the epoch of maximal withdrawal, of secular modernity, as an emblem of the human maturity required by the God of covenant.

In Greenberg's view, secular modernity has done much to affirm and enable the human, to free humans for greater, divinely intended autonomy. But it has also exponentially increased the risk of idolatry, the praxis of evil. Secularism was a necessary corrective to religious traditions, both Jewish and Christian, that had discredited themselves through their mutual hatred, their obscurantism, their spiritualist escapism. But the liberating impulse in secularism soon moved beyond a critique of historic religion to a total repudiation of the divine. Modernity became its own god and both Jewry and the gospel became its victims. The idols of modernity—race, nation, the state—tried to kill the people of God, Jewry in the flesh and Christianity in spirit. In the after-

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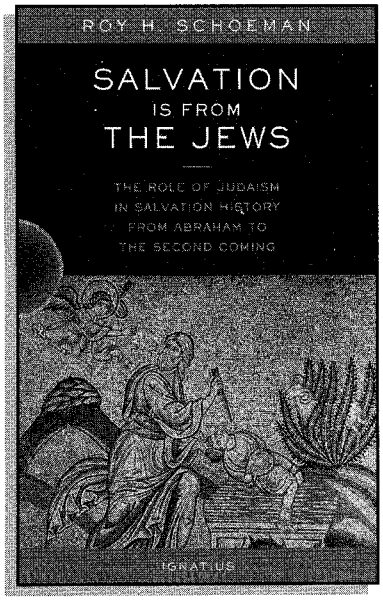

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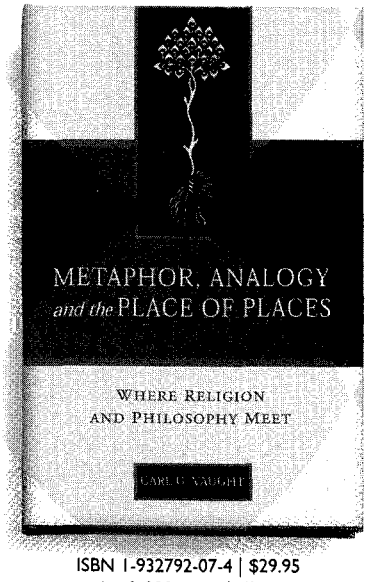
math of an unfathomable tragedy, both Jews and Christians must do what God requires of His covenanted Israel—work with redoubled effort for the affirmation of life.

Christianity and Judaism must both fully embrace the new possibilities within modernity for human liberation and dignity, but they must also chasten modernity so that it remains a means, not an end. Judaism must shed its diffidence toward history and once again engage with the realities of power, statehood, and universal concern for the other. Christianity must shed its supersessionism, triumphalism, and privileged association with power; it must free the gospel of love from the ancient biases and habits that have compromised it. In Judaism, Christianity can find a correction of its sometimes world-despising spirituality. In Christianity, Judaism can reconnect with God's saving purposes beyond its own garden. Greenberg roots the distinctive moments of Christianity—the messiahhood of Jesus, the resurrection, the great commission—in Judaism's own soil. If Judaism does not produce messiahs, he insists, then it has failed because it has abandoned hope. For Jews, Jesus is—Greenberg laments the potential for misunderstanding implicit in this charged term—a "failed messiah." Not false, but failed. But then, God's purpose often seems to fail in the world, only to be realized in ironic ways. In his failure, Jesus is at his most recognizably Jewish.

All of the essays repeat this same cluster of ideas, developing their implications with different emphases and nuances. What are we to make of the project? I must confess to great ambivalence about it. Its boldness and hope are captivating as a religious vision but disturbing as a utopian politics. In Greenberg we find a theologian who calls on Jews to validate the realities of statehood and power—an almost Hobbesian affirmation of what survival requires in a world where Auschwitz is possible—and who also calls Jews and Christians to revise radically their theologies as the first step in the project of perfecting and redeeming the world as partners in covenantal pluralism. The proximity of sober political theology with intoxicated eschatological anticipation is disorienting.

At first, Greenberg sounds a Niebuhr-like note: power and statehood are necessary to secure the conditions under which Jews and others can flourish. But any sense of the obduracy of human sin is lost in



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the expectation that fully mature, covenantally empowered humans can bring God's creation to redemptive perfection. Indeed, Greenberg rejects Christianity's emphasis on the radicality of human sin. Overemphasis on miraculous salvation, on grace, is incompatible with his covenantal model. It is a stage to be outgrown. When Christians are truly ready to validate Judaism, they will take greater responsibility for the repair of this world, engaging side by side with Jews in the human project of bringing the Messiah. Christians are to be partners in what has become the watchword of the modernist Jewish religious project: *tikkun olam*—"repairing the world."

Greenberg is not satisfied with the view that Christianity is legitimate only insofar as it resembles Judaism. He goes so far as to affirm God's incarnation in Christ—not, to be sure, as a plausible tenet of his own (or any other Jew's) belief, but as a possibility for God. He declines to stipulate, on the basis of God's covenant with the Jews, what God can or cannot do for the gentiles. And yet prescription cannot be avoided. In Greenberg's view, Christianity acquires full validity only when it acts in ways that comport with his Jewish sense of the redemptive, world-perfecting task of religion—and, crucially, only when it repudiates its anti-Judaism. Christians are only a covenanted people if they cease to despise the Jews. Christianity is falsified by immorality. How do these judgments square with the radical affirmation that he also seems to propose? The problem, I believe, derives from an unexamined equivocation in his concept of covenant: it refers both to historical events of pact-making and, metaphorically, to divine-human relationships. If covenant is only a metaphor for relationship, then poor behavior may be thought to sabotage the relationship. But if covenant also describes a statement of historical fact—as Jews and Christians have been inclined to believe—then poor behavior may make for an angry God, but it does not retroactively annul what happened on Sinai or Pentecost.

Here we come to the deep problem with Greenberg's project, the problem of truth. Greenberg wishes to endorse pluralism without endorsing relativism. Far from a noncommittal relativism, pluralism is "an absolutism that has come to recognize its own limitations." There is such a thing as absolute truth, but such truth must recognize itself as absolute only within a particular context. The peaceful coexistence of various absolutisms is pluralism; their self-elected partnership as divinely mandated vehicles for redeeming the world is covenantal pluralism. And covenant, recall, entails the assumption of human finitude, responsibility, and enlightened maturity, the sign of which is epistemic modesty. Is this coherent or is it mere word play? How is a context-dependent absolutism different from a nonabsolute absolutism?

What Greenberg offers is a theology of civility, but it is unclear that any such proposal can escape the relativism it claims to surmount. I would have thought that an ethic of civility alone would suffice. To live by an ethic of civility requires a respectful engagement with the other, whether as fellow person or as fellow citizen. Sometimes this might require the suspension of absolute claims for the sake of peace. Often it requires the commitment to discourse, persuasion, and rational intercourse in which absolute claims are not weakened but opened; one displays one's humanity as a principled difference. This is a feature of civilized conduct *inter homines*. The absolute is not de-absolutized; it is held in tension with complex moral and political conditions of conduct. I would think that a strong but nonutopian ethic of civility is preferable to a problematic theology of reconciliation. But perhaps this scants heaven in favor of earth. Or, then again, perhaps Greenberg advances purely earthly goods in the name of heaven. Although his questions are more compelling than his answers, Greenberg deserves our gratitude for the important challenges he puts to us.

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Text Before Subtext

Scalia Dissents: Writings of the Supreme Court's Wittiest, Most Outspoken Justice
Edited by Kevin A. Ring
Regnery. 256 pp. $45.90.

Reviewed by Maxwell and Elizabeth Goss

During his almost twenty-year tenure on the United States Supreme Court, Justice Antonin Scalia has led a continuous assault on judicial tinkering. The rule of law, he has argued, demands that we be bound by the text of the law—not by evolving social standards, not even by some elusive authorial intent, but by the actual words of the Constitution and of the statutes passed by state and federal legislatures.

Scalia has articulated this textualist philosophy in his frequent public lectures, in his penetrating book *A Matter of Interpretation*, and in his many Supreme Court opinions. In *Scalia Dissents: Writings of the Supreme Court's Wittiest, Most Outspoken Justice*, attorney Kevin A. Ring collects some of the most memorable of these opinions. The stated aim of this volume is to bring to a wider audience "some of the most noteworthy, colorful, and entertaining opinions ever written by a United States Supreme Court Justice." More important, the collection traces the development of Scalia's view—derided by progressive law professors and controversial even among conservatives—that, in Ring's words, "laws—and especially that supreme law known as the Constitution of the United States—say what they mean and mean what they say."

Maxwell and Elizabeth Goss *are doctoral candidates in philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin and Wilbur Fellows at the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal.*

Appointed in 1986, Scalia has been on the Court long enough to have tackled virtually every important legal issue of our day: abortion, religious liberty, race and gender equality, gay rights, and separation of powers, among others. The opinions collected here—some dissenting from the majority of the Court, others concurring in judgment but rejecting the majority's reasoning—show how Scalia applies his textualism to these issues, and how it differs from competing theories of interpretation, most notably the "living Constitution" view favored by many on the left and the varieties of intentionalism favored by many conservatives and moderates. The collection confirms Scalia's reputation as a trenchant critic of judicial arrogance and as a dogged defender of the Constitution as it was originally understood.

In Scalia's view, the Court has for a half-century indulged in one project of social engineering after another, purporting to find an assortment of previously unknown rights squirreled away beneath the visible surface of the Constitution. The Court's fondness for "legislating from the bench," as some describe it, reached a crescendo in 1973, when the majority declared a constitutionally protected right to abortion, thereby invalidating statutes in forty-six states and establishing itself as the sole arbiter of the nation's abortion laws. While some have suggested that the Court has reined in its activist tendencies over the years—and there have indeed been heartening signs, such as the elevation of William Rehnquist, a dissenter in *Roe v. Wade* (1973), to the position of Chief Justice the same year Scalia joined the bench—Scalia's recent opinions remind us that these tendencies often prevail.

Less than two years ago, for example, the Supreme Court ruled in *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) that laws prohibiting sodomy are unconstitutional, citing the same privacy protections it used to justify its decision in *Roe*. While the *Lawrence* decision came as no great surprise, the rationale expressed in Justice Anthony Kennedy's majority opinion is unexpectedly sweeping in its implications. In an explosive dissent, which Ring includes, Scalia excoriates Kennedy for his contention that enforcement

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of a majority's moral beliefs does not advance any legitimate state interest. Scalia writes:

> Countless judicial decisions and legislative enactments have relied on the ancient proposition that a governing majority's belief that certain sexual behavior is "immoral and unacceptable" constitutes a rational basis for regulation. . . . State laws against bigamy, same-sex marriage, adult incest, prostitution, masturbation, adultery, fornication, bestiality, and obscenity are likewise sustainable only in light of [the Court's previous] validation of laws based on moral choices. Every single one of these laws is called into question by today's decision.

In his concurrence in the earlier *Barnes v. Glen Theatre* (1991), which upheld the constitutionality of an Indiana public nudity law, Scalia had ridiculed "that Thoreauvian 'you may do what you like so long as it does not injure someone else' beau ideal" which some have tried to read into the Constitution. Scalia argued that such a principle, if applied, would spell the death of all laws enforcing public morality. Twelve years later, this "beau ideal"—known to philosophers as the utilitarian harm principle—found its way into the majority opinion in *Lawrence*. As Scalia flatly observes, "this effectively decrees the end of all morals legislation."

As Scalia's dissent makes clear, the majority opinion in *Lawrence* epitomizes everything that is wrong with the contemporary Court—its arbitrariness, its contempt for democratic governance, its constant readiness to fashion new constitutional rights out of whole cloth. Never mind that in *Bowers v. Hardwick* (1986), only seventeen years earlier, the Court had voted to uphold a Georgia anti-sodomy statute, or that in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), eleven years earlier, it had expressed the most solemn devotion to *stare decisis*. Now, the Court tells us, it has discerned an "emerging awareness that liberty gives substantial protection to adult persons in deciding how to conduct their private lives in matters pertaining to sex." The Texas law is suddenly unconstitutional. The *Lawrence* decision, Scalia seems to suggest, is not just the result of poor interpretative technique or pragmatic text-wrangling—it is a case of naked judicial legislation:

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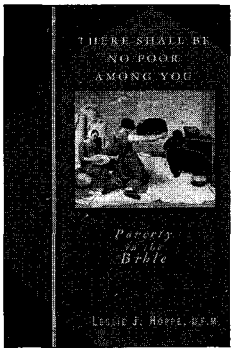

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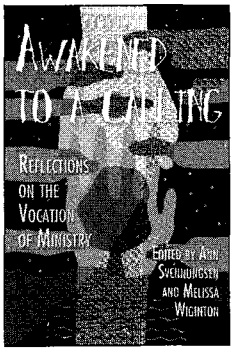

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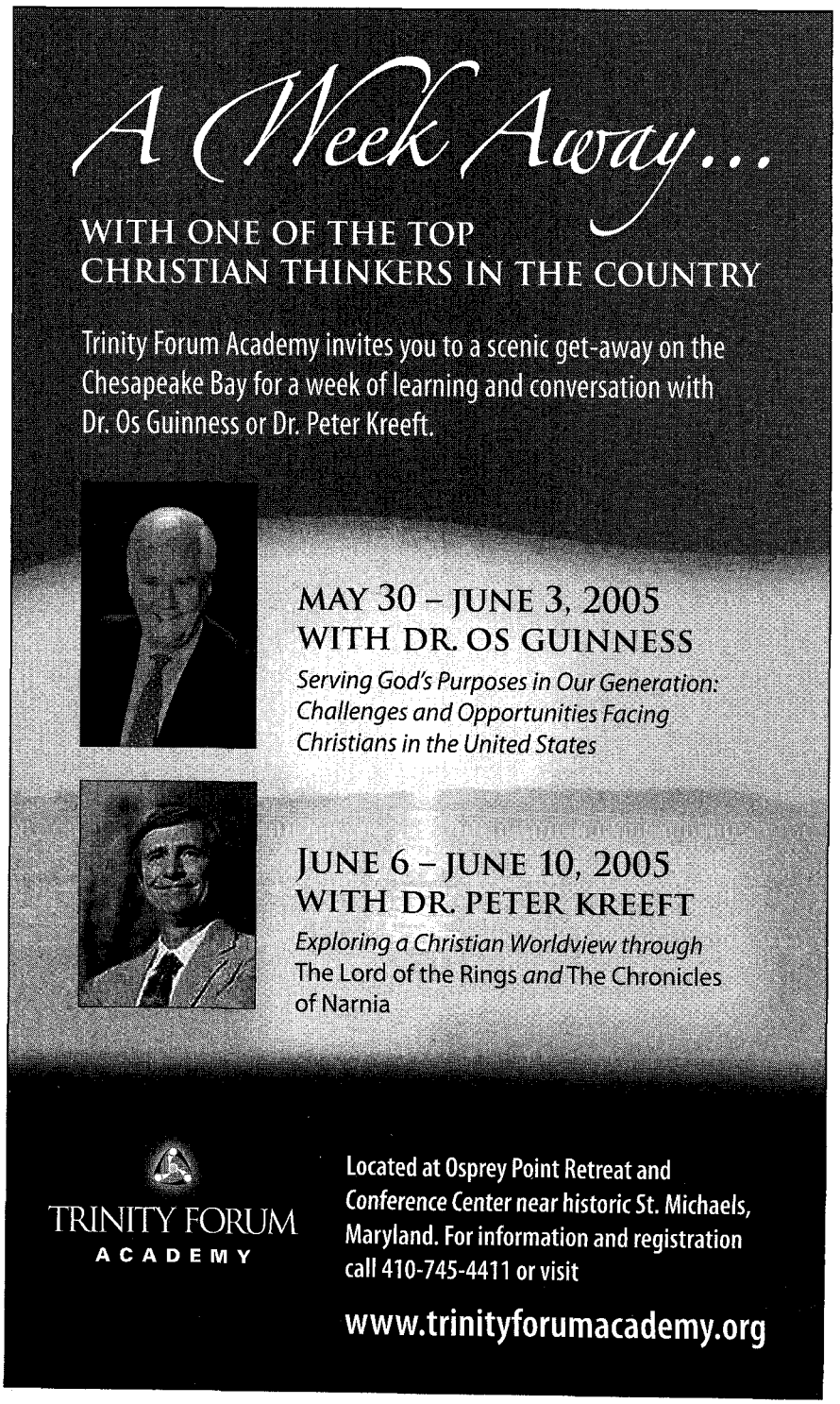
"The Court has taken sides in the culture war."

The notion that an "emerging awareness" can reveal hitherto unknown rights is, of course, the central claim of the famous "living Constitution" theory. The problem with this open-ended interpretive model is that it invites the rule of judges. After all, who gets to decide which "awarenesses" are emerging? Scalia insists repeatedly that malleable judicial standards—reflected not only in the Court's appeals to evolving social norms, foreign courts, and living documents, but also, in some cases, in its reliance on authorial intent—give the Court carte blanche to impose its arbitrary will. What Scalia says in his dissent to *Morrison v. Olson* (1988) could apply to many of the Court's decisions: "Evidently, the governing standard is to be what might be called the unfettered wisdom of a majority of the Court, revealed to an obedient people on a case-by-case basis. This is not only not the government of laws that the Constitution established; it is not a government of laws at all." Scalia suggests that Kennedy, O'Connor, and other Justices adhere to what might be described as a sort of legal Gnosticism, according to which the meaning of the Constitution is to be found not in what its text overtly states but in some mysterious message conveyed only to black-clad savants.

Perhaps the happiest outcome of the Court's many miserable decisions is that they provide Scalia with occasions for writing opinions that are both persuasive and entertaining. In one unforgettable passage, Scalia compares the much-criticized *Lemon* test—which the Court uses now and then in its jurisprudence dealing with the "establishment" provision of the First Amendment—to a stumbling movie monster that "repeatedly sits up in its grave and shuffles abroad after being repeatedly killed and buried." In his dissent in *Casey Martin v. PGA Tour, Inc.* (2001), the Justice ridicules the Court for involving itself in the rules of golf. The Framers, he says, must have "fully expected that . . . judges of this august Court would some day have to wrestle with that age-old jurisprudential question, for which their years of study in the law have so well prepared them: Is someone riding around a golf course from shot to shot *really* a golfer?" Passages such as these guarantee a wide readership for Scalia both within and outside the legal community.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DESPITE THE APPEAL of the opinions themselves, however, and despite the very useful background information provided by Ring, the collection is not a complete success. For starters, the book's title is a bit misleading. It invites readers to assume that Scalia is always on the losing side of a case or, worse, that Scalia is intentionally disagreeable. In fact, several of the opinions included here are concurrences, either in part or in full. Some of Ring's editorial choices are also dubious—for instance, his inclusion of some long decisions that are likely to bore or bewilder his intended audience. Scalia's dissents in *Morrison v. Olsen* and *United States v. Virginia* (1996) are no doubt important, but each is nearly forty pages in length and full of details unlikely to interest the general reader.

More disappointing, Ring misses opportunities to clarify Scalia's textualist theory for readers. Although he competently summarizes this theory in his introduction, Ring does little to distinguish textualism from originalism in general or from originalist intentionalism in particular. Readers who are generally sympathetic to the attempt to return to an original understanding of the Constitution may not be aware that Scalia rejects the dominant theory about how this is to be done—intentionalism. For him, the intentions of the Framers are almost as easily manipulated for partisan purposes, and thus almost as susceptible to abuse, as the living-Constitution theorists' evolving standards of decency. We must look instead to something more publicly accessible—that is, to the language of the Constitution itself and the conventions governing that language. Ring fails to give readers any sense of what's at stake in this important debate between intentionalism and textualism. Perhaps Ring's greatest shortcoming as an editor is that he is too much the cheerleader. There is, of course, much to cheer about in these opinions, but a more serious engagement with Scalia's critics would have resulted in a richer treatment of his ideas.

Still, Ring's project is a worthy one. This well-organized volume gives readers not only an introduction to Scalia's thought but a guided tour through the difficult issues the Supreme Court has addressed in recent years. Read together, Scalia's opinions are a bracing antidote to the legal opportunism that has infected many of the Court's recent decisions. They are also a troubling reminder that the infection continues to spread.

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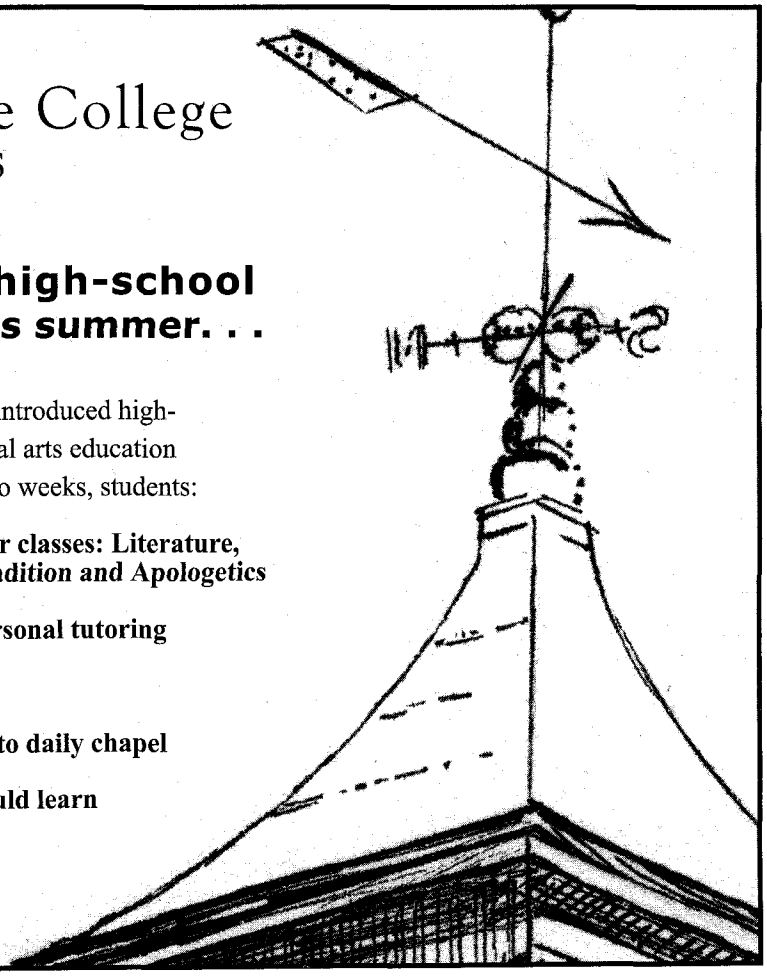

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Jesus Christ Superfluous

When Jesus Came to Harvard: Making Moral Choices Today
By Harvey Cox
Houghton Mifflin. 338 pp. $26.

Reviewed by
Colleen Carroll Campbell

When the Higher Education Research Institute at U.C.L.A. recently released a study of religious and spiritual attitudes among today's college students, their findings confirmed what astute campus observers had been witnessing for years. American collegians are largely amenable to organized religion, and a substantial segment of them identify themselves as morally conservative.

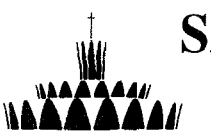
The survey found that three out of four college students say they pray, discuss religion or spirituality with their friends, and find religion to be personally helpful. One in five is "highly religious," a term that describes students who frequently attend religious services and re-treats, read sacred texts, and join campus religious organizations. These "highly religious" students tend to be more disapproving than their peers of casual sex, abortion, homosexual relations, and the legalization of marijuana. Their conservative leanings are part of a broader trend increasingly documented in freshman surveys, federal statistics, and public opinion polls, which have found declining rates of approval for casual sex and legal abortion among the young and a rise in the percentage of teenagers who say they are virgins. In contrast to the libertine students of the '60s, today's young adults seem increasingly willing to accept limits on their behavior and to seek the guidance of authoritative moral and religious teaching.

Unfortunately, the typical educational experience in today's secularized university does little to help students in their quest for meaning and moral guidance. The modern university's emphasis on academic specialization and its skepticism about the possibility of discerning moral truth have deprived students of opportunities to pose and ponder life's biggest questions in the classroom. While three in four students polled by the U.C.L.A. researchers said they are "searching for meaning and purpose in life," more than half said their professors never provide opportunities to discuss these matters.

The problem is not new. Recognizing the inadequacy of an education that teaches facts and figures but ignores questions of morality and meaning, Harvard attempted to address the problem in the early 1980s by adding a "moral reasoning" course requirement to its core curriculum. Among the new offerings was "Jesus and the Moral Life," a course taught by the prominent Harvard theologian Harvey Cox.

In his new book, *When Jesus Came to Harvard: Making Moral Choices Today*, Cox gives readers a front-row seat at the course he taught for fifteen years. Using biblical stories told by and about Jesus as his starting point, Cox offers a series of wide-ranging reflections on everything from the ethics of in vitro fertilization to the biblical accuracy of the *Left Behind* novels. Though its title suggests a moral guidebook or a survey of contemporary student morality, this book is neither. Cox has written a theological manifesto that urges readers to see Jesus and his moral teachings in the way that Cox does—

Colleen Carroll Campbell *is a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and author of* The New Faithful: Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy *(Loyola Press).*



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disconnected from the trappings and truth-claims of traditional Christianity and therefore relevant to our search for answers today.

Cox begins by outlining what he sees as the chief moral dilemma that confronts his students: an inability to discern, discuss, or defend moral truth. These "benevolent but uncomfortable relativists" tended to "believe that morality was a 'sometimes' thing. It varied from age to age, from society to society, and from person to person." Though they instinctively recoiled from such practices as genital mutilation or genocide, Cox writes, their politically correct conditioning left them without a way to justify their moral revulsion in universal terms. "In the end, even the most religious students had to settle for a kind of mutual tolerance, do-no-harm stance, which they increasingly recognized was important but just not enough."

Cox's diagnosis is dead-on. The same cannot be said for the treatment he proposes. One might have expected that a course in moral reasoning based on the teachings of Jesus would include an introduction to the idea of natural law and some discussion of traditional moral teachings, but Cox disagrees with many of the basic tenets of orthodox Christianity and doubts our ability to identify unchanging and absolute truth in religion or morality. Although he claims that Jesus is still relevant to us today, Cox devotes much of his book to convincing readers that Jesus' teachings were fully true only for his contemporaries. "Like the generations of rabbis who came after him," Cox writes, "he did not offer answers that would apply to everyone and for all time." The similarity between Cox's attitude here and the one he criticizes in his students a few pages before is striking: his reservations notwithstanding, Cox appears to be one of the many "benevolent relativists" of Harvard Yard.

COX WANTS TO DISABUSE his readers of the sentimental, ahistorical understanding of Jesus that he detects in nearly every tenet of Christian orthodoxy. Some of his historical and theological insights are indeed valuable. Cox rightly counters the anti-Semitism that separates Jesus from his Jewish roots and the Docetism that denies his humanity. Cox regularly reminds readers that Jesus was fully human, a man who ate and drank and slept. The Jesus we meet in this book reverently practiced his Jewish faith as he grew in strength and wisdom. In this sense, at least, Cox's Jesus truly is the Jesus of the Bible.

But the similarities end there. In Cox's view, Jesus was a spunky rabbi who spun enigmatic tales intended only to remind Jews of what they already knew. Jesus did not offer new or unique teachings, urge his followers to prepare for eternal life with God, or fulfill a messianic mission. Instead he encouraged them to relinquish their hopes for a divine intercessor and focus on collective action and nonviolent rebellion to improve their lot here on earth. As for the reason Jesus was put to death, Cox locates the proximate cause not in humanity's sinfulness; nor in Jewish outrage over Jesus' claims to be the Son of God and the Way, the Truth, and the Life; nor in the jealousy of religious leaders threatened by Jesus' miracles (which Cox suggests were the fruit of positive thinking on the part of those who "feel" healed after touching Jesus); nor in his teachings (which Cox insists were uncontroversial among the Jews). Instead, Cox says, Jesus was killed because he posed a political threat to the Roman occupiers of Palestine.

Cox's political portrait will gratify those who see Jesus as a wise, rabble-

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rousing rabbi and nothing more, but it is impossibly inconsistent with the Gospels on which he professes to rely. The author insists on a literal reading of the biblical accounts that would seem to support his quasi-Unitarian Christology while skipping over passages that contradict his views. In some cases—such as the Lucan account of the virgin birth or eyewitness reports about the risen Jesus—Cox mentions the troublesome passages but discourages his readers from grappling with their literal meaning and supernatural elements. Readers should instead focus on their *real* meaning—a moving target that ranges from Cox's symbolic interpretation to the way the stories resemble those of other world religions to the latest heterodox conjecture posed by a fellow Harvard professor.

In considering the Easter story, for instance, Cox describes the biblical accounts of Jesus' bodily resurrection as the confused ramblings of disciples who knew no other way to express their feeling that their rabbi remained somehow present in their lives. Cox offers scant evidence for this claim, perhaps confident that any intelligent reader will reflexively dismiss reports of supernatural phenomena. Even if the resurrection occurred, Cox writes, it "might not be all that significant. Sometimes the inexplicable happens." The real meaning of reports about Jesus' resurrection is that "God eventually vindicates the victims of all forms of persecution." But Cox will not even insist on that timid synopsis: "I *do* recognize that there are many other possible interpretations, and I would not discount any of them. In fact, 'interpretation' is a very secondary matter. The 'something' eludes all our theories and interpretations. But we have the *story*, and when the experience it conveys and evokes makes a real difference in our lives, the various theories all begin to sound less important."

In fact, very little about Jesus makes a difference in our lives if the Gospel stories are not true. Cox asks us to accept the Gospels as both historically reliable and utterly mythological, depending on which stories we are reading. He likewise asks us to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher while ignoring Jesus' claim to divinity. As C. S. Lewis reminds us in *Mere Christianity*, that position is untenable. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. His claim was either true or false. "You must make your choice," Lewis writes. Jesus may be a liar or a lunatic, or he may be the Lord, but

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Recovering Spiritual Interpretation of Scripture

Dr. Mary Deeley
Resident Scholar

The Seminar will include a panel discussion on The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship on the evening of Thursday, June 16th. Dr. Diane Bergant, C.S.A., Professor of Old Testament at Catholic Theological Union, and Dr. C. Colt Anderson, Assistant Professor of Church History at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, will join Rev. William Kurz, S.J., and moderator Dr. Mary Deeley.

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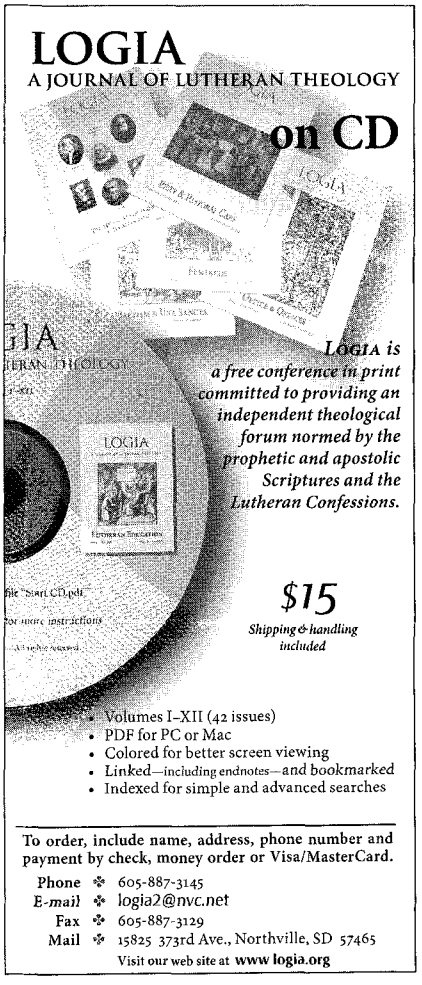
"let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

At campuses like Harvard, orthodox Christian fellowships have experienced explosive growth even as the culture around them grows more decadent. These groups, which encourage students to grapple with bold truth-claims about the nature of God and the meaning of life, are tapping into a hunger for truth too often ignored in the classroom. As the middle ground between traditional religious morality and secular hedonism continues to shrink in America today, college students like Cox's are realizing that they must make a choice about whether truth matters. How fitting that at a university whose motto is *Veritas*, many are deciding that it does.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The Language of Belief

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS: REFLECTIONS ON CATHOLIC TRADITION
By EAMON DUFFY
Continuum. 187 pp. $16.95 paper.

Reviewed by Robert Louis Wilken

Faith of our Fathers is a spirited defense of Catholic ritual, discipline, and communal observance—of the ways in which the collective wisdom of Christian tradition is passed on from one generation to another. "After thirty-five years of studying and teaching the theology and history of the Church," writes Eamon Duffy, "I find myself living more and more out of resources acquired not in the lecture room or library, nor even at the post-conciliar liturgy, but in the narrow Catholicism of my 1950s childhood, warts and all." This insight, says Duffy, "springs . . . from growing appreciation of just how much of the essence of Catholicism my provincial Irish childhood transmitted to me. For all its apparent narrowness, it bore stronger witness than many modern forms of Catholicism to realities which have come to seem to me infinitely precious. Its ritual absolutes and rules look legalistic, rubric-mad today: but they spoke with a sure confidence of the sacramentality of life, the rootedness of the sacred not in pious feelings of 'spirituality,' not in our heads or even exclusively our hearts, but in the gritty and messy realities of life, birth, death, water and stone and fire, bread and wine."

Eamon Duffy is no traditionalist, mind you. He is calling neither for the restoration of the Tridentine Latin liturgy nor for a return to the devotional practices of past generations. Duffy is generally considered to be a man of the left, and he has been a critic of some of the policies of Pope John Paul II. Again and again in these essays he says that tradition has to do with change, adaptation, and in one place he calls it an instrument for "discovery." Yet he has come to view the developments within Catholic life over the last two generations with mounting alarm—not because they brought change but because they ignored the deeper wellsprings that nourish and sustain Catholic piety.

Duffy cites many examples to support this contention. I think his most telling illustration comes in the book's final essay, which is about the abandonment of the practice of fasting and abstinence. Duffy considers this "one of the saddest and most serious casualties" of the reforms. Prior to Vatican II abstinence from meat during Lent and on Friday and fasting from midnight before the morning one received the Eucharist were defining marks of Catholicism, just as abstaining from pork is a defining mark of Judaism. Yet after the Council these rules were dismissed as mere "externals," marks of a superficial piety that needed to be replaced by more "spiritual" forms of devotion. So the dietary disciplines were scrapped. Lost was a corporate observance that set the contours and rhythm of life, that gave meaning to feasting and abstinence and taught renunciation as well as affirmation. In its place was put an individualistic injunction to perform some form of penitential act on Friday. In this way, a communal practice as old as the Church itself became a matter of private choice. "Abolish such observances and you strike at the heart of tradition and you abolish the distinctive language of belief," Duffy writes. He describes it as a form of "ritual suicide."

Duffy makes a point of reminding us that he is a "cradle" Catholic, raised in what many consider the

ROBERT LOUIS WILKEN *is the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Virginia.*

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narrow, provincial, and oppressive world of Irish Catholicism, where the phrase "God is love" was "thumped into you with a stick and the penny catechism." But Duffy is now a distinguished historian of Christianity at the University of Cambridge and the author of an influential study of pre-Reformation English Church life, *The Stripping of the Altars*. He comes to this reflection on the present state of Catholicism with an intellect formed by the study of late medieval Catholic life. As a historian, he is more interested in the Church on the ground—in what the faithful do when they pray the rosary or bury their dead—than in what theologians are thinking.

Duffy argues that despite real advances in scholarship, many of the reforms adopted in recent generations have been strangely unhistorical in their approach to Catholicism. Preoccupied with abstract theories about the proper role of liturgy in the Church's life, the reformers focused on the rationale behind forms of worship and devotion not on their latent vitality and potency. They failed to understand how Catholic practice actually worked; they were insensitive to the capacity of certain ritual acts to foster a sense of mystery and awe in the presence of God—that is, to put one in touch with the holy. In a nice phrase Duffy writes that "we have allowed the vocabulary of gestures" to become thin and one-dimensional.

Most of the essays collected in *Faith of our Fathers* were originally published in the British journal *Priests and People*. They address such topics as the Virgin Mary, the saints, the Eucharist, the papacy, the priesthood, death and dying, prayers for the dead, hell, and the Inquisition. The essays are all short and easy to read; they are often insightful and always historically well informed. In an essay titled "Rome of the Pilgrims," Duffy observes that in the past the city of Rome was a great cemetery, and most Catholics on pilgrimage to Rome came to pray at the many tombs of the saints. Today most pilgrims come to see the pope and are only dimly aware of the relics of saints that are to be found in churches scattered throughout the holy city.

In an essay titled "Why Do We Need the Pope?" Duffy, the author of a popular history of the papacy, *Saints and Sinners*, offers a fresh defense of some very ancient ideas. The distinguishing feature of the

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papacy, he writes, is its witness to the apostolicity of the Church. In the conflict with Gnosticism in the early Church, bishops set forth theological arguments in defense of the apostolic faith, they appealed to Scripture, and they cited the words of the "rule of faith." But they also insisted that apostolicity meant being in communion with the Church's bishops. The bishops were concrete signs that the apostolic faith had been preserved not in arcane and secret teachings but in persons who were known and identified. This is why Catholics symbolize their unity in a person, the bishop of Rome, not in a theology. God calls us, says Duffy, not into some ideal fellowship or spiritual Church but to the responsibilities of membership in an actual human community. In an interesting aside, he observes that the papacy is the strongest glue "holding together the centrifugal energies of American Catholicism in some sort of unity."

Two essays are about saints, one on changes in Marian piety over the last fifty years and another titled "What Do We Want from the Saints?" In the latter Duffy mounts a critique of the present model of sanctity—the saint as exemplar, a person who embodies some aspect of the Christian ideal. In the past, especially the distant past, the saints were venerated as prodigies, miracle-workers, intercessors, protectors. The more they were unlike the rest of us, the better. They brought the majesty and otherness of God down to earth and allowed ordinary men and women to see and touch the divine. Hence the importance of relics. The body of the saint was the locus of supernatural power.

According to Duffy, the new model of sainthood fosters Pelagianism, "a wearisome emphasis on good deeds and moral effort, the saint as prig and puritan." In his view the older model is far better, offering us the saint as spiritual tightrope walker, ascetic star, eccentric. This analysis seems plausible in theory, but it ought to be noted that the most popular person to be beatified in recent years is the stigmatic Padre Pio, who was very much an eccentric, an ascetic, and a prodigy. Another popular modern saint, Thérèse of Lisieux, lived a form of renunciation and mortification far beyond the reach of most Christians. Here Duffy seems to have let his ideas get out ahead of the facts.

As these observations suggest, *Faith of our Fathers* ranges far and wide over the present state of Catholicism. But Duffy never wanders too far from this one persistent argument—that much of the vitality and resiliency of Catholicism is found in its rituals and worship, in lay devotions and Marian piety, in veneration of the Church's blesseds and saints, in acts of communal discipline and obedience that bind the faithful together as a living organism. This may not be the only thing that needs to be said about the Church at the beginning of the twenty-first century, but it is a welcome and timely word. And it is very good to have it from a scholar as learned and reflective as Eamon Duffy.

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Briefly Noted

John Buridan: Portrait of a Fourteenth-Century Arts Master.
By Jack Zupko.
University of Notre Dame Press. 550 pp. $40 paper.

Jack Zupko of Emory University is from the Cornell school of medieval philosophy. These scholars see it as their mission to explain to today's analytic philosophers why they should find in the thought of the Middle Ages a rich and interesting source for their own intellectual projects. In *John Buridan: Portrait of a Fourteenth-Century Arts Master*, the many virtues of this approach are manifest. This book is at once an accessible introduction to nominalist philosophy and an intellectual biography of one of the most important figures in the history of Scholasticism. Despite being a Nominalist during the time when William of Ockham's person and writings were so controversial, the diplomatic Buridan (c. 1300-c. 1361) was twice appointed rector at the University of Paris, which was then the great center of medieval intellectual life. Buridan was unusual in that he was a diocesan priest at a time when most academics were either Dominicans or Franciscans, and in that he remained in the Arts faculty as a philosopher when most intellectuals of his caliber saw philosophy as a stage on the way to a doctorate in theology. Zupko emphasizes that Buridan's decision to remain in the Arts faculty kept him from becoming embroiled in the heated theological disputes of the day, which probably explains why he was able to rewrite all the philosophy textbooks to reflect his Nominalist philosophy and his interests in physics and natural philosophy. In Zupko's telling, Buridan was an institutional genius who had a strong sense of the boundaries of his discipline. When someone objected to his answers to thorny metaphysical questions because of their implications for theology, Buridan refused to concern himself with the problem, declaring that theological questions were for the theology faculty and not for the ostensibly lower faculties. Zupko claims, somewhat provocatively, that this insistence on the division of labor between philosophy and theology provides the best angle from which to view Buridan's famous dispute with the proto-Cartesian thinker Nicholas of Autrecourt. According to Zupko, Buridan's major complaint was not so much with Nicholas' skeptical conclusions as with his temerity in trying to interpret Aristotle's philosophical works as a theologian. By regarding the differences between philosophy and theology as a matter not of method but of institutional structure, Buridan helped make philosophy a secular discipline completely independent from theology and its guidance. Many have made wild claims about the nominalist roots of modernity, but Zupko's simple suggestion may prove to be not only sober but substantially correct.

—Daniel P. Moloney

A Terry Teachout Reader.
By Terry Teachout.
Yale University Press. 448 pp. $38.

This generous collection of Teachout's writing on books, film, music, television, theater, dance, and more is only a small sample of his work as a "critic-for-hire" since the mid-1980s.

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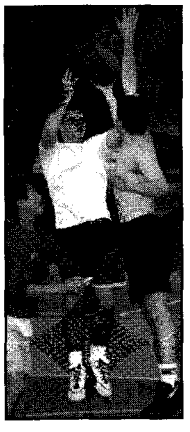

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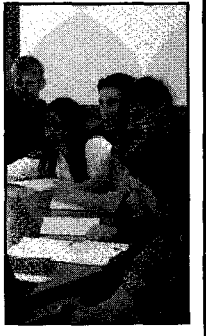

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During this period, he says, "America crossed a great cultural and technological divide," and he hopes this selection "may have some value as a chronicle, a road map of how we got from there to here, and what we lost—and gained—in the process." Technologically, we've gained digital tools with which we can store, transmit, and select from a vast array of music, movies, and visual arts. But we've lost the wide sharing of any single experience of art: as we select just what we want, we diminish our chance of being exposed to what we don't already know. We've been confirmed in solipsistic habits by "niche marketing" and "narrowcasting"; and popular culture has been "proletarianized" and "coarsened," as witness reality TV and gangsta rap. Culturally, we've had "a loss of nerve," adopting a postmodernism that "disbelieve[s] in truth and beauty, claiming instead that nothing is good, true, or beautiful in and of itself." In the higher reaches of our culture this has produced more theory than art, and in the more demotic branches it has led to "the sniggering, fearful Irony Lite that was the hallmark of American culture in the '90s." But culturally there has been gain as well. Teachout is witnessing a renewed "quest for beauty" as "a growing number of post-postmodern artists use that word without encasing it in the protective quotation marks of irony." He instances the plays of David Ives, the films of Whit Stillman and John Sayles, new operas, "New Tonalist" composers, and the dances of Mark Morris. Teachout hopes we can somehow rediscover the artistic faith that he recalls from the "middlebrow culture" of his youth—the "acknowledgment of an ascending hierarchy of values, a ladder whose rungs could be climbed by anyone willing to make the effort." Teachout is in no doubt about the proven ability of American artists to ennoble popular culture while popularizing serious culture, and he writes beautifully about many

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exemplars in many fields, "those artists who spoke in the crisply empirical, immediately accessible tone of voice now acknowledged by the whole world as all-American."

—*J. A. Gray*

The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam.
By F. E. Peters, with a foreword by John L. Esposito.
Princeton University Press.
312 pp. $24.95.

Aristotle's Children: How Christians, Muslims, and Jews Rediscovered Ancient Wisdom and Illuminated the Middle Ages.
By Richard E. Rubenstein.
Harcourt. 384 pp. $15 paper.

The usual way of expressing the volatile mix that is Western Civilization is to speak of the tension between Athens, Jerusalem, and Rome (representing, respectively, Hellenic reason, monotheistic faith, and imperial drive coupled with legal uniformity). But that leaves out Islam, which is clearly intruding on the West in ever more obvious ways. Perhaps the better way to think of this volatility would be not in geographical terms of capital cities but—as these two books suggest when read in tandem with each other—as a genealogical problem: we are the children of both Abraham and Aristotle. Neither book wishes to give lessons for how to deal with the contemporary "clash of civilizations," except perhaps to stress that this clash is not so much between as within civilizations. Not that such an insight will go far in helping resolve these essentially internal tensions. Peters' book (a revision of his first book on this theme, based on twenty-five years of published work) makes especially clear how in all three monotheistic religions early moves, strategies, and interpretations proved utterly determinative for all later developments. Given the debt that all three traditions owe to Aristotle, it might seem that the Stagirite's views on natural law as the foundation for morality would point the way to greater comity, if not outright amity; but Rubenstein's history of that debt does not leave much room for hope either. For example, he recounts the highly ironic request of certain rabbis in the Middle Ages that the Inquisition burn Moses Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* because of its unholy mixture of faith and reason. And

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Hobbes + Heschel
Ignatius + Inge
Jones (David) + Jones (Rufus)
Keble + Knox (all 3 of them)
Laud + Lull
Merton + Melanchton
Neuhaus + Newman
O'Connor (Flannery) + Otto
Pascal + Pusey
Quesnel + Quine
Rahner + Ruysbroeck
Scheler + Suárez
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while Aristotle eventually received Catholic blessing because of the precedent set by Thomas Aquinas, Arab Aristotelians were largely secular professionals (physicians mostly) who had to rely on worldly patronage from caliphs and provincial governors. Once such patronage disappeared (imams in the House of Islam being much more powerful, needless to say, than were rabbis in the Christian West), Aristotle soon faded from the mental horizon of Arab civilization. Nor did ecclesiastical support for the Dominican Aristotelians end up doing Aristotle much good in the wake of Luther, Galileo, and Newton. The modest

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revival of interest in medieval philosophy in the past forty years might augur a change in fortunes for reasoned discussion of how to understand God's role in all three religions, but one finishes these two lucid books far more aware of lost opportunities than of newfound hope.

—Edward T. Oakes, S.J.

Casanova in Bolzano.
By Sandor Marai.
Knopf. 304 pp. $22.

This short novel by a Hungarian who died in exile in the U.S. in 1989 was written in the 1930s and, along with his *Embers* which was published here in 2001, is hailed as a major literary discovery. The author says the only connection between his hero and the famous lecher is the name. Marai's burned-out Casanova has escaped from a Venetian prison and, after many years, meets up with the Duke of Parma for whose beautiful wife's favors he had once contended. They talk, sometimes interestingly, for many pages about love and life and death and growing old. Some have claimed to detect similarities with Robert Musil's masterful *Man Without Qualities*. That may puzzle admirers of Musil.

The Meaning of Tradition.
By Yves Congar, O.P.
Ignatius. 175 pp. $14.95 paper.

Congar, who died at age ninety-one in 1995, was, according to Avery Cardinal Dulles' foreword to this book, "perhaps the greatest master of the theology of tradition who has ever lived." Congar's understanding of tradition as a complex process in which the tacit is made explicit is justly compared with John Henry Newman's reflections on the development of doctrine, and had an enormous influence on the Second Vatican Council. The present book is an

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abridgement of Congar's massive two-volume work on tradition, and is highly recommended for both personal study and classroom use.

Bless This House: Prayers for Families and Children.
By Gregory Wolfe and Suzanne M. Wolfe.
Jossey-Bass. 240 pp. $19.95.

"The central thesis of this book is that parents need to do more than simply give their kids prayers to say. Rather, parents themselves should learn to pray by praying with and for their children." The husband and wife who wrote this little book are fine literary artists and the parents of four children. Incorporating their years of experience and their consultations with experts on spirituality, they have created a substantial little guidebook to the "earthy spirituality of family life" to help parents meet their responsibility for nurturing the souls of their children—in which process the parents will find their own souls nurtured in turn. The excellent introductory essay starts at square one, with a parent's common question, "How can I teach my kids to pray if I don't know how to pray myself?" Taking into account the stages of childhood development, the many different aspects and kinds of prayer, the special needs of interdenominational and interfaith families, and much more, the Wolfes offer deep reflection and practical advice. The bulk of the book is a rich collection of prayers from many sources on which families can draw for different seasons, occasions, celebrations, and crises. This book should become a treasured possession in many households.

Rediscovering America's Sacred Ground: Public Religion and Pursuit of the Good in a Pluralistic America.
By Barbara A. McGraw.
SUNY Press. 241 pp. $16.95 paper.

Writing for a general audience, the author surveys some of the disputes over whether the public square should be naked, sacred, or civil. The "sacred ground" of the title is variously described but usually seems to mean the common good. McGraw, who teaches at Saint Mary's College of California, skirts some of the harder questions joining moral discernment and public policy. Abortion, for instance, is not to be found in the index. Hers is an exclusively Lockean and contractual reading of the American founding, devoid of the covenantal intonations of providential purpose. Her insistently advanced definition of religion is radically Protestant and individualistic, effectively identifying religion with individual conscience understood as self-direction. Her understanding of the "separation of church and state" entails also a separation of conscience from church. She wants to steer a middle course between "left" and "right," but one wonders if her repeated affirmation that "the voice of the people is the voice of God" might be equally objectionable to both. As a form of democratic idolatry, it ought to be.

More Catholic Than the Pope: An Inside Look at Extreme Traditionalism.
By Patrick Madrid & Pete Vere.
Our Sunday Visitor.
186 pp. $12.95 paper.

Started in France, the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) now has an estimated one million members worldwide. SSPX, founded by the late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, presents itself as being in communion with the Catholic Church and apparently most of its members believe that is the case. This book is aimed at disillusioning them. The evidence presented is conclusive, but whether it will convince is another matter. Both authors identify themselves as traditionalists and Mr. Madrid provides the "inside look" as a former Lefebvrist.

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The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion, Culture, and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

America as a Religion

That America is guided by Providence is a belief deeply entrenched in the seventeenth-century beginnings, the constitutional period, Lincoln's ponderings on our greatest war, and Woodrow Wilson's convictions about the inseparable connections between freedom and American destiny. The belief has never been absent from American public life and discourse, although in the last half century many, and not least religious thinkers, have tried to discredit or marginalize it. In recent years, however, the idea of a providentially guided America has been making a comeback. One thinks, for instance, of Michael Novak's *On Two Wings*, which makes a strong case for the Founders' Hebraic understanding of history, as well as providing a marvelous florilegium of their statements about providential purpose (see review, FT May 2002). More recently, Steven Webb has provided an incisive and nuanced account of the history of the idea in *American Providence: A Nation with a Mission* (see review, FT February). Then there was and is the attention aroused by the controversy over "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, a phrase suggestive of both divine direction and judgment. Of greatest influence perhaps has been the harsh criticism of George W. Bush's employment of the idea of Providence in relation to the course of freedom in the world, even though his statements have generally been carefully honed and are unexceptionable in the context of presidential history.

Another important contributor to the new discussion is David Gelernter of Yale. I have earlier raised questions about his near-identification of Puritanism with Judaism in American history (see Public Square, FT February). Now he has gone considerably farther with an essay in *Commentary*, "Americanism—and Its Enemies." Gelernter writes, "By Americanism I mean the set of beliefs that are thought to constitute America's essence and to set it apart; the beliefs that make Americans positive that their nation is superior to all others—*morally* superior, closer to God." He goes farther still: "Americanism is in fact a Judeo-Christian religion; a millenarian religion; a biblical religion. Unlike England's 'official' religion, embodied in the Anglican church, America's has been incorporated into all the Judeo-Christian religions in the nation." America is a religion that has been incorporated into other religions? The suggestion of syncretism is pronounced—or, as one reads on, the suspicion arises that Americanism has in some way displaced the other religions. One wonders if this is a new version of "supersessionism," an idea excoriated in Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Gelernter writes: "I believe that Puritanism did *not* drop out of history. It transformed itself into Americanism. This new religion was the end-stage of Puritanism: Puritanism *realized* among God's self-proclaimed 'new' chosen people—or, in Abraham Lincoln's remarkable phrase, God's 'almost chosen people.'" Lincoln's is indeed a remarkable phrase, but the "almost" seems to get lost in Gelernter's account. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Reform Jews who rejected the Zionist idea of a Jewish state declared that "America is our Zion." Gelernter appears to have moved beyond that. "We can go further. To sum up Americanism's creed as freedom,

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equality, and democracy for all is to state only half the case. The other half deals with a promised land, a chosen people, and a universal, divinely ordained mission. This part of Americanism is the American version of biblical Zionism: in short, American Zionism." He says he is working on a "Thanksgiving Haggadah" that will recite the providential story of America including the "repeated reenactments of the Exodus that make up America's history." The Haggadah is, of course, the Passover retelling of God's liberation of the children of Israel, similar to the Anamnesis in the Eucharist that recites the saving deeds of God in Christ.

"And so," writes Gelernter, "we circle back to the beginnings of Protestantism, which begot Puritanism, which begot Americanism." There is no room for Catholicism in this telling of the story. "Papism" and Anglicanism's compromise with papism are the Pharaoh from which God delivered his Puritans who begot Americanism. That aspect of Gelernter's American religion is troubling, to put it delicately, but many will be even more troubled by the hubris of Americans being "positive that their nation is superior to all others—*morally* superior, closer to God," that America is "a promised land, a chosen people, and [has] a universal, divinely ordained mission." *The* promised land? *The* chosen people? More than all others? Presumably Gelernter, being a Jew, would not say so, although I am not sure.

Certainly, Christians *must* not say so. Christ and his body the Church is our first community, prior in time and prior in allegiance. Jews can speak to the Haggadah, but an American Anamnesis is, not to put too fine a point on it, idolatry. It is a welcome development of great importance that thinking about America and Providence is receiving renewed attention. The direction pointed by David Gelernter, however, ends up in conclusions that contributed to discrediting such thinking in the past. For a far more promising way of exploring these questions, I recommend Steven Webb's *American Providence*.

FT

INTERESTS, IDEALS, AND WORLD WAR IV

What to make of Andrew Bacevich's long article in the Winter 2005 issue of *The Wilson Quarterly*, "The Real World War IV"? The editor of the *WQ*, Steven Lagerfeld, seems a bit nervous about publishing it, concluding his introductory note with this: "It's a provocative argument, from a writer whose thinking never fails to command our interest." I have no problem with that. Bacevich, who teaches at Boston University, has published in these pages, but in the last couple of years has taken an isolationist turn and seems more at home publishing in Pat Buchanan's *American Conservative*. He has been a vigorous, some would say strident, opponent of the Bush doctrine following September 11, and his *WQ* article aims to counter the arguments of Norman Podhoretz and others who have promoted the idea that we are engaged in World War IV and must win it.

A lot of thoughtful people are uneasy about U.S. policy in Iraq. In January, William F. Buckley reported on a dinner conversation in which conservatives were sharply divided over whether, if they knew then what they know now, they would have supported military action in Iraq. Buckley ended his column with the suggestion that people should be demanding an early withdrawal from Iraq, but only if President Bush "beckoned" them to do so. A few days later, however, a Buckley column favorably reviewed Podhoretz's most recent and very hawkish manifesto. What does Bacevich's article contribute to this unsettled state of the question among people who have in common that they understand themselves to be conservatives?

First, Bacevich underscores that U.S. policy in the Middle East was significantly set by FDR when in 1945 he promised military protection to the Saudis if they would guarantee an unlimited flow of oil under U.S. control. So there is something to the "blood for oil" slogan after all. He makes the interesting argument that our current circumstance began with, of all people, Jimmy Carter. In 1979, Carter made his "American malaise" speech (called that even though he never used the word "malaise") in which he asked Americans to sacrifice in order to cut back on our reliance on Mideast oil. When it quickly became apparent that Americans were in no mood for such sacrifice, Carter took direct, and miserably failed, military action in Iran. This, says Bacevich, was a departure from decades of policy in which the U.S. tried to control the Mideast through military surrogates. In Bacevich's telling, Reagan, Bush I, and Clinton expanded fitfully but incrementally the policy of asserting direct U.S. control in the Mideast, a policy that reached what he describes as its disastrous fullness under Bush II after September 11.

Bacevich accuses this and prior administrations of disguising geopolitical designs under the language of promoting freedom and democracy in the world. There are other parts to his argument, all folding into his chief gravamen, *The New American Militarism*,

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the title of the book from which the *WQ* article is drawn. Of course Bacevich is right that current U.S. policy has a history, and that history is closely related to our dependence on oil. Although he very seriously downplays the importance of the establishment of the state of Israel in this drama. He is surely right in saying that American presidents, when appealing for support for military action, typically accent ideological and idealistic reasons rather than geopolitical factors. One may be permitted to suggest that that is rather obvious. Bacevich takes it as an indictment of U.S. foreign policy over recent decades. His *realpolitik* perspective leads him to belittle the degree to which a concern for freedom drove, for instance, U.S. support for Western Europe's resistance to the Soviet Union during the Cold War (i.e., World War III). The Cold War was not about freedom, he comes close to saying, but about geopolitical rivalry between the superpowers. The editor of *WQ* is right in saying that Bacevich is provocative.

Finally, however, it is not clear what difference the argument makes. One may agree that deep geopolitical and economic interests have contributed to shaping U.S. policy in the Middle East, and that many mistakes have been made since FDR struck his deal with King Ibn Saud, even as one believes that Bacevich has overlooked other important factors. Yet, after his all-stops-pulled polemic against America's misbegotten "crusade," Bacevich ends up writing, "God forbid that the United States should fail, allowing the likes of Osama bin Laden and his henchmen to decide the future of the Islamic world." Precisely.

It is useful to point out that U.S. policy is also self-serving (an older phrase for self-serving is "the national interest"), as well as serving the interests of many others. But that hardly precludes other motivations, such as a desire to promote freedom and democracy, which is also in our interest and the interest of the world. Might all these interests have been better served by different policies over the last sixty years? Quite possibly. That, however, is to engage in counterfactual historical revisionism that is but an interesting thought experiment. Andrew Bacevich is a conservative. Wishing for a history other than the one we have been given is not ordinarily the kind of thing that conservatives do.

"Crackpot realism" is a phrase not much used since the Vietnam era, but it comes to mind in reading Bacevich's account of our present circumstance. One need not ignore economic and geopolitical factors to be more impressed by the explanatory narratives provided by scholars such as Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington who accent the cultural and religious sources of the current conflict. For instance, the murderous vision of Sayyid Qutb of Egypt (born 1906, executed 1966), founding father of the Muslim Brotherhood and the radical Islamism that gave birth to such as al-Qaeda, cannot be reduced to geopolitical or economic rivalries. Noam Chomsky may believe it, but I doubt whether Andrew Bacevich really thinks that George W. Bush's impassioned declarations about the universal quest for freedom are but a guise for maintaining American hegemony over the world's oil resources. To the extent that Bacevich tells uncomfortable truths about the ambiguities, including moral ambiguities, that brought us to our present circumstance in the Middle East, his argument is to be welcomed. Even as one recognizes the logic of his conclusion that, however we got to where we are, we must hope that U.S. policy, shaped by both interests and ideals, will not fail.

FT

Stifling Intellectual Inquiry

"In fact, the breadth and extent of the anti-evolutionary movement that has spread almost unnoticed across the country should force American politicians to think twice about how their public expressions of religious belief are beginning to affect education and science. The deeply religious nature of the United States should not be allowed to stand in the way of the thirst for knowledge or the pursuit of science. Once it does, it won't be long before the American scientific community—which already has trouble finding enough young Americans to fill its graduate schools—ceases to lead the world." That is the editorial voice of the *Washington Post* which, on this subject as well as most others, is temperate compared with many others in the liberal establishment.

The alarm is prompted, of course, by the efforts of school districts to teach students that evolution is a theory. That evolution is a theory is a fact, unless somebody has changed the definition of theory without notifying the makers of dictionaries. The "search for knowledge" and "the pursuit of science," one might suggest, will suffer grievously if we no longer respect the distinction between theory and fact. To argue that skepticism about the theory of evolution is inadmissible if it is motivated by religion is simply a form of antireligious bigotry. It is a fact that many devout Christians, many of whom are engaged in the relevant sciences, subscribe to the theory of evolution. It is also a fact that some scientists who reject

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religion also reject evolution, or think the theory highly dubious. That is the way it is with theories.

Theories are proposed principles or narratives that are both arrived at and tested by their explanatory force relative to what are taken to be known facts. To simply equate evolutionary theory with science is a form of dogmatism that has no place in the pursuit of truth. The problems with that approach are multiplied by the fact that there are such starkly conflicting versions of what is meant by evolution. The resistance to the theory is almost inevitable when it is propounded, as it often is, in an atheistic and materialistic form. Atheism and materialism are not science but ideologies that most people of all times and places, not just "red state" Americans, deem to be false. Proponents of "intelligent design" and other approaches, who are frequently well-certified scientists, contend that their theories possess greater explanatory power.

If someone claims the theory of evolution is false because it contradicts their understanding of what the Bible says, that is not a scientific argument in the ordinary meaning of science. It is an argument from the authority of the Bible, or at least from a certain interpretation of the Bible. One may make that argument in an eminently rational way, although in a way that will not be convincing to many people. Just as the theory of evolution is not convincing to many people. That is the way it is with arguments. The proponents of intelligent design, however, are not making their argument from the authority of the Bible but from what they are persuaded is the scientific evidence. Their opponents contend that their argument is discredited because most of them are Christian believers. Turnaround being fair play, one might answer that the more aggressive proponents of evolution are discredited because they are typically ideological atheists and materialists. These are religio-philosophical disputations of a low and *ad hominem* sort and have no place in what is, or should be, scientific methodology.

The great question of the origin and development of life in the cosmos is endlessly fascinating. Intellectual freedom and integrity require that all pertinent evidence and lines of reasoning be taken into account in forming speculations, hypotheses, and theories regarding that great question. It is a historical fact that evolutionary theory, variously construed, has achieved a status as "the truth" among most scientists in the century past. It has also had its very eloquent dissenters, such as David Berlinski whose work has received frequent attention in these pages (see Public Square, FT May 2004). For the past decade, we have had the scientific proponents of "intelligent design" sometimes frontally challenging and at other times offering significant modifications of the theory of evolution. The defenders of evolutionary orthodoxy raise the alarm at any suggestion of intelligent design or purpose, thereby implicitly endorsing a narrowly dogmatic version of evolutionary theory.

Some school boards have very modestly suggested that students should know that evolution is not the only theory about the origin and development of life. What they want students to know is an indisputable fact. There are other theories supported by very reputable scientists, including theories of evolution other than the established version to which students are now bullied into giving their assent. On any question, the rational and scientific course is to take into account all pertinent evidence and explanatory proposals. We can know that the quasi-religious establishment of a narrow evolutionary theory as dogma is in deep trouble when its defenders demand that alternative ideas must not be discussed or even mentioned in the classroom. Students, school boards, and thoughtful citizens are in fully justified rebellion against this attempted stifling of intellectual inquiry.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ Asked to summarize his conservative philosophy, former editor Jim Nuechterlein would respond, "Change is bad." In fact, his philosophy is considerably more interesting than that, but you have to begin somewhere. As it happens, there are a number of changes in our shop and I am confident the result will be very good. Although we will very much miss Damon Linker. He joined us as associate editor in 2001 and succeeded Jim as editor in 2004. He is resigning to write a book about the people involved with FT and their effort to advance a vibrant religious presence in the public square. Damon has been a conscientious, loyal, and exceedingly competent colleague, and I will miss him. Returning to FT as editor is Joseph Bottum, who was our associate editor from 1995-97 before he left to preside brilliantly over the back of the book at the *Weekly Standard*. Joseph, Lorena, and their daughter Faith are settling back into New York, and I am eagerly looking forward to what I trust will be our long-term collaboration. A real loss is John Gray, who was associate editor only one year. He was, in addition to other virtues, a great deal of fun to have around. Family responsibilities compelled him to decide, most reluctantly, that he needed to return to California. Suc-

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ceeding him is Matthew Boudway, who has been our managing editor and who, as associate editor, will also have primary responsibility for books. Replacing (if that is possible) Matthew as managing editor is Erik Ross who has been an exceedingly efficient editorial assistant. Taking over from Joseph Bottum as poetry editor is Anthony Lombardy, a widely published poet who has served as coeditor of the *Tennessee Quarterly* and divides his time between Belmont University and the family farm in Florida, where they grow fern and citrus fruit. Kristen Linton, daughter of Michael Linton who writes for us on music and culture, is currently serving as editorial assistant, and she will be succeeded in May by John Rose, the younger brother of Matthew Rose, who was with us for two years as editorial assistant. John and Matthew Rose, as well as former editorial assistant Vincent Druding (who is now studying for the priesthood), are all from Wabash College, Indiana. It seems that staff from Wabash is becoming something like a tradition. Jim Nuechterlein is wrong about change being bad. Although I suppose the above changes are marked more by continuity than by discontinuity. I count it a great blessing that, since launching FT in 1990, there has been remarkable cooperation and cordiality among the staff, and I have every reason to believe that will continue to be the case. If not. . . . Well, I don't even want to think about it.

■ Jewish and Christian "progressive faith leaders," as they are called by the newsletter of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, met for a two-day session in Washington to evaluate the wreckage of their cause. The "moral values" factor in last November's election, they recognized, was a disaster. The meeting was sponsored by the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank, and resulted, it says here, in a major shift of strategy. The faith leaders are going to stop calling themselves progressives. From now on they are prophets. "'Progressive' sounds like it's an ideological position with values attached," said the Rev. James Forbes of New York's Riverside Church. Said Bob Edgar, general secretary of the National Council of Churches, "We sound like secularists when we need to sound like the prophetic religious leaders we are." In the biblical tradition, it will be remembered, prophets do not presume to appoint themselves but are called by God and speak on His behalf. The conclusion of the Washington strategy meeting, it would seem, is that progressives need to be more morally presumptuous.

■ The end of the Pius wars? The book of that title by Joseph Bottum and David Dalin gives us reason to hope so (see While We're At It, FT February), but that doesn't mean some folk won't keep trying. Here is a *New York Times* story giving credence to the claim that Pius XII sent a letter to Angelo Roncalli, papal nuncio in France and later Pope John XXIII, instructing him to raise obstacles to Jewish children being returned to their parents. These were children whom Catholics had rescued from the Holocaust. The letter is unsigned, not on papal stationery, and is written in French, although the Holy See's communications with Roncalli are all in Italian. There is no mention of such a communication in Roncalli's exhaustive journals and diaries. Plus, as the *Times* admits, nobody knows who "discovered" the document. And there are on record explicit and undisputed instructions by Pius XII that such children should be returned to their Jewish parents. In short, the document is almost certainly a fraud. That will not stop the inveterate enemies of Pius XII from citing it. Perhaps they will employ the locution of the *Times* with respect to Dan Rather's notorious use of fake documents in attacking George W. Bush's national guard service. As the *Times* memorably said, the documents were "fake but accurate." In this case, accurate means useful in advancing your purposes.

■ "Oh, not that old line again." Such is the frequent response when the claim is made that the demolition of the marriage-based family really began with the widespread acceptance of artificial contraception and its separation of sex from procreation. Now, however, "that old line" is getting new and more respectful attention. *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands* has been receiving well-deserved praise (see review, FT March). The author is W. Bradford Wilcox, a sociologist at the University of Virginia, and he connects his argument to the question of contraception in an article in the ecumenical magazine *Touchstone*, "The Facts of Life and Marriage: Social Science and the Vindication of Christian Moral Teaching." He notes the well-orchestrated opposition to Paul VI's 1968 encyclical on human sexuality, *Humanae Vitae*, and contends that current scholarship debunks the opponents and underscores the prescience of the Pope in foreseeing the consequences of contraception. From the Bible through the *Didache* and the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers, Christians were unanimous in affirming the integral relationship between love, sex, and openness to new life. The first break in the tradition came with the approval of contraception by the Church of England in 1930. All these years later, Wilcox is encouraged by a changing scholarly consensus on marriage and family, but also by a rethink-

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ing of contraception among Christians. "There is a new openness among Evangelical Protestant scholars and leaders to the truth and wisdom of the ancient Christian teaching against contraception. Among others, Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary professor Harold O. J. Brown, and Evangelical theologian J. I. Packer have raised serious concerns about the moral permissibility and social consequences of contraception." He quotes Mohler who wrote in these pages: "Thirty years of sad experience demonstrate that *Humanae Vitae* [correctly] sounded the alarm, warning of a contraceptive mentality that would set loose immeasurable evil as modern birth control methods allowed seemingly risk-free sex outside the integrity of the marital bond. At the same time, it allowed married couples to completely sever the sex act from procreation, and God's design for the marital bond. . . . Standing against the spirit of the age, evangelicals and Roman Catholics must affirm that children are God's good gift and blessings to the marital bond. Further, we must affirm that marriage falls short of God's design when husband and wife are not open to the gift and stewardship of children." The radical destabilizing of sexual morality in recent decades, Wilcox notes, has had devastating consequences for the poor, for whom all of life, including family life, is precarious. This, he says, is the moment for Christian scholars and leaders of all kinds to take the lead in proposing a better way. "We must make it crystal clear that the church's commitment to the poor requires nothing less than a vigorous proclamation of the church's true and beautiful teaching about sex and marriage. In other words, we must make it clear that the preferential option for the poor begins in the home."

■ Yes, I saw the *Time* magazine cover story on "The Twenty-Five Most Influential Evangelicals in America." Along with Senator Rick Santorum, another Catholic, I'm not sure what we were doing in that impressive company. (The story did note that we are Catholics.) It is not even a flirtation with false modesty to say that the story greatly exaggerates my influence. When *The Naked Public Square* appeared, Clare Boothe Luce, the widow of Henry Luce, sent multiple copies to friends and told me that, "if only Harry were alive," she would have arranged for me to be on the cover of *Time* the way she had arranged it for Father John Courtney Murray. Malcolm Muggeridge once remarked that the cover of *Time* is "the most coveted stained glass window of the modern world." That was a very long time ago. But it's nice to have made it at last, even if I did have to share space with twenty-four others. Some while back *U.S. News and World Report* did a survey in which I was listed as one of "the thirty-two most influential intellectuals in America." The number thirty-two gave the judgment a tone of careful deliberation. Not twenty-five, not fifty, but thirty-two. That survey is sometimes mentioned when I am introduced on public occasions. To which I usually respond, "How would they know?" Popular magazines are given to pieces on the "top" figures in this, that, or another connection. FT doesn't do that sort of thing, which is maybe one reason it is not so very popular. Although we did publish that book, *The Second One Thousand Years*, in which we proposed representative figures for each of the centuries of the millennium past. That at least has the merit of historical perspective not generally available to newsweeklies.

■ In that *Time* magazine cover story it was said, "Conservative churches mobilized as never before and helped reelect a president they see as one of their own. Now they expect him to deliver for them." Charles Colson, no stranger to the game of politics, dissents. He asks whether President Bush "owes us," and answers with a ringing No. Colson writes, "Almost every time the Church has achieved earthly power, it has managed to shoot itself in the foot." And there are deeper considerations: "And remember, Christians are just as susceptible to the seduction of worldly power as anyone else. The editors of *Time* may think religious voters ought to be lining up for our share of the spoils, but Christians know we should instead be falling on our knees, asking God to keep us humble. We ought to remember that the job of the Church is to bring biblical truth to bear in society, to win people to Christ, and to promote righteousness and justice. We should remember, as well, that throughout history, Christians have made the greatest inroads in society when we traveled, not among the politically powerful, but among the poor and the powerless. Think of the Wesleyan revivals or of Wilberforce and his reformation of morals in England." The question, says Colson, is not what Bush "owes us" but what we owe God. A jaundiced observer might say that Colson is being coy: in grabbing for power it is wise not to be perceived as grabbing for power. But those who might say that do not know Chuck Colson. I have been with him in meetings when religious leaders started talking about how they could punish uncooperative politicians at the ballot box. Colson immediately and firmly calls them to order, reminding them that the role of Christian leaders is to bear faithful and persuasive witness. His Prison Fellowship, a worldwide ministry to prisoners

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and their families, exemplifies the concern for "the poor and the powerless." Moreover—and this is evident also in his several books—Colson has a powerful concern for the integrity of the Church. He well remembers that the corruption of the mainline/oldline liberal churches was intimately connected with their confusion of the gospel of Jesus Christ with their political agendas. The *New York Times* had a sympathetic story the other day on liberal-left figures such as Jim Wallis of *Sojourners* and Bob Edgar of the National Council of Churches who, it said, are trying to organize a political counterforce to "the religious right." The reporter wrote that "liberals have historically been uneasy about mixing religion and politics." Now that is coy. Unless, of course, the reporter was born yesterday, as Chuck Colson was not.

■ *Christianity Today*, the mainline evangelical magazine, was generally pleased with the *Time* story on evangelical leaders, noting that "this is a group that's broader than you think." It is allowed that *CT*'s list of the twenty-five most influential evangelicals "would surely be somewhat different." Some might question the presence of the two Catholics but *Time* "offers solid argument for including both." Evangelicals, on the other hand, might wonder about the inclusion of two or three "evangelicals" who are doubtfully evangelical. There are those who challenge, for instance, the evangelical credentials of Brian McLaren, leader of the "emerging church" movement. But, all in all, the *Time* portrayal "is the evangelical movement understood in its historical context." "Let's be thankful that evangelicalism and its diverse leadership are becoming better known and better understood by the larger culture." The larger culture? Depending upon how one defines evangelical, evangelicals are one quarter to one third of the American population. After the election of Jimmy Carter, *Time* magazine did a big story declaring 1976 "The Year of the Evangelical." It is passing strange how these people called evangelicals keep getting rediscovered and reintroduced to "the larger culture." One of these times I expect it will be recognized, also by evangelicals, that they are a very large part of the larger culture.

■ Here I stand. There you stand. But, hey, it's no big deal. Some while back I suggested that the ELCA Lutherans will try to avoid splitting the body over gay issues by avoiding a decision and thereby deciding to allow the ordination of gays, the blessing of same-sex unions, and other demands of the inclusiveness agenda. I take no satisfaction in noting that that is what seems to be happening. After three years of intense wrangling, a task force has concluded that disagreements on sexual morality are "deep and pervasive." The solution being proposed to the ELCA churchwide assembly this summer is that the body keep its formal rules in favor of traditional morality but agree not to discipline those who violate them. Lutherans Concerned, a gay advocacy group, is not entirely happy, since the recommendation falls short of the affirmation they sought, even if it meant splitting the five-million-member body. Dr. Philip Krey, president of the ELCA seminary in Philadelphia, offers an interesting take on the recommendation: "The task force didn't want legislation. That would have created a win-lose situation. They wanted to legitimize both sides of the issue. This allows each side to be conscientious objectors, allows them to legitimately disagree and act on it and not be disciplined for it." This may be something new in the long history of strategic thinking about Christian unity. The phrase "unity in diversity" has long been a staple in ecumenical discussions. The ELCA would appear to be moving beyond that to unity in disagreement, indeed unity because of disagreement. When everyone gets to be a conscientious objector, one has to wonder what they are objecting to, other than the toleration of opposing objectors, which is the one thing to which they have agreed not to object. It is a fascinating proposal, which if generally accepted could open the way to instant unity, of a sort, among all Christians. Although woefully wrongheaded, if not idolatrous, there is a refreshing candor in the task force's recommendation that questions of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, orthodoxy and heresy, be set aside in order to serve the Supreme Good that is preserving the institution that is the ELCA.

■ The same day brought the report that the bishops of the Episcopal Church, meeting for two days in Salt Lake City (an unlikely religio-cultural juxtaposition), wrestled with the recent Windsor Report on conflicts in the Anglican communion but were not able to come to a resolution. The Windsor Report wanted the Americans to apologize for installing as bishop a man who had left his wife and children to live with his male lover, countenancing the blessing of same-sex unions, and related offenses. The Utah meeting expressed "sincere regret for the pain, the hurt, and the damage caused to our Anglican bonds by certain actions of our church." They very notably did not apologize for the certain actions. Said the U.S. presiding bishop Frank Griswold, "We perhaps have not been the most sensitive partners in terms of taking with full seriousness the integrity of other provinces and their struggles." Perhaps. As Griswold and other Episcopal leaders have

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suggested on many occasions, the main struggle of Anglicans in Africa and Asia is in growing up and following the example of their American betters in accepting the changed sexual mores of the modern world.

■ I still comment from time to time on the strange world of the *New York Times*. Old habits die hard. The issue that carried the above two reports also has a long puff piece on an Episcopal rector in Connecticut. His conscientious support for "gay rights" has led him to declare that his small parish will perform no marriages at all until the Episcopal Church officially approves same-sex marriages. The parish, it says here, has in the past had as many as five marriages a year. There is yet another story on the same day about a Conservative rabbi who says she is being punished for performing gay marriages, but whose colleagues say she is in trouble only for serving in a non-Conservative synagogue. That is four religion stories in one day; four out of four being about gay advocacy. With respect to what is happening in religion in America, that is "all the news that's fit to print." To be accurate, this edition of the *Times* is not atypical. To be fair, the reports on the ELCA task force and Episcopal bishops are eminently newsworthy, bearing as they do on the future of a sizeable Lutheran communion and the much smaller but more culturally potent Episcopal Church.

■ The religion news in that edition of the *Times* is balanced by a full-page advertisement with the heading "A Call for Peacemaking." It is sponsored by a new organization called "Tent of Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah" and features familiar names such as Sister Joan Chittester, Bob Edgar of the National Council of Churches, Jim Wallis of *Sojourners*, Rabbi Arthur Waskow of the Shalom Center, and the perhaps not so familiar Sayyid Muhammad Syeed of the Islamic Society of North America. The call is for the U.S. to pull out of Iraq, for the UN to arrange for an elected government in that country, and for a "comprehensive peace conference" including the UN, the European Union, and Russia to put things to rights in the Middle East. So it is not as though the readers of the *Times* get a one-sided view of what is happening in religion in America. The cutting edge developments include *both* the promotion of gay rights and opposition to the policies of the Bush administration. For the *Times*, this way of covering religion is a cozy deal, both ideologically and economically. For a full-page advertisement, I am told the *Times* charges about $100,000. In addition to the ad being supportive of the paper's line on the Bush administration, it more than amply pays for the reporting and printing of the day's stories on the battles between religious progressives pushing for sexual inclusiveness and the reactionaries who oppose them. Of course the *Times* sometimes carries full-page ads advocating conservative positions. This gives more naïve readers the impression that the *Times* is more or less balanced. The nice thing is that this burnishing of the paper's image is handsomely paid for by those who despise the paper. Coming or going, the *Times* wins. One has to admire the way in which everyone cooperates in upholding the belief that to be is to be in the *Times*. The *Times* is in the ontological reassurance business. Here is another full-pager purchased by citizens of the Republic of Iceland (population 279,384 and 96 percent Lutheran) who want us to know that most of them do not agree with their government's support for U.S. policy in Iraq. It's good to have that cleared up. And maybe it's worth every third Icelander kicking in a dollar to the *Times* to let the world know they're still there. The 1972 chess match between Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky was a long time ago. Not for nothing is the *Times* known as a profit-leader in what is aptly called the news industry.

■ Once again on intelligent design (ID). Professor Terry Noel of California State University writes in the *Wall Street Journal*: "The reason most scientists reject ID is that it fails to add anything to our understanding. Placing any kind of 'super-intelligence' in our explanatory chain of the origins of life simply puts the final question off. If one proposes that some kind of intelligence is behind it all, then one must in all fairness inquire into the origins of that intelligence and so on, an infinite regression." This is a bit of a puzzle. If one concludes that the evidence suggests ID, then it certainly adds to one's understanding if one previously thought the evidence did not suggest ID. It follows that one would then reject the rejection of ID. Inquiring into the origins and nature of that intelligence may take one into questions usually described as philosophical and theological rather than scientific. In that case, one either accepts a more humble notion of what can be known by scientific methodology or expands the definition of scientific methodology to encompass all considerations pertinent to the inquiry at hand. Both possibilities are repugnant to many scientists, who therefore reject ID. A livelier scientific curiosity, one is inclined to think, might lead not to infinite regress but to progress toward the infinite. But Prof. Noel may be right: most scientists have made up their minds and decline to think seriously about evidence and arguments suggesting that they may be wrong. That, too, may change, albeit very slowly.

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■ Fifty-three years after Bill Buckley's *God and Man at Yale*, one might expect Yalies to be a bit less snooty on some questions. James Kirchick, a columnist for the *Yale Daily News*, reviews Naomi Schaefer Riley's *God on the Quad* in the *New York Sun*. Ms. Riley offers a generally favorable assessment of the religiously affiliated colleges and universities she has studied. Mr. Kirchick is having none of it. He writes, "How, just to cite one of many examples, does the establishment by Baptist Baylor University of a center to study 'intelligent design' (a trendy euphemism for Creationism) point to her contention that the students who attend these schools are not 'intellectually backward?'" Baylor, we are told, is evidence of religious colleges being "strictly informed by unquestioning and narrow dogma." Really? Leaving aside the scientific merits of intelligent design theory, it is controversial because it dares to challenge the strictly enforced, unquestioned, and narrow dogma of Darwinian evolutionism. (And what, one wonders, might be a questioning dogma?) "The self-proclaimed values of the modern university," writes Mr. Kirchick, "are a commitment to a liberal education." Never mind the grammar, the point is that you wouldn't find a modern university like Yale tolerating such freedom of inquiry. He says of Ms. Riley that "her positivism is unhindered" by what Mr. Kirchick thinks unattractive about religious colleges. I rather doubt that Ms. Riley is a positivist. I suppose he meant that she is an optimist. In any event, the deficiencies in Mr. Kirchnick's education are not necessarily representative of Yale. Although I expect the snootiness about that "other America" may be.

■ Americans tend to be taken aback by the virulence of Catholic statements in Europe, especially in Italy, about the wickedness of Freemasonry. In Latin countries, the Masons were and are unremittingly hostile to Christianity, meaning Catholicism. The Church reciprocated by forbidding membership in the Masons under pain of excommunication. Some thought they detected a thaw when the 1983 Code of Canon Law prohibited membership in societies that plot against the Church but did not mention Freemasonry by name. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has since indicated that the former sanctions still apply. Masonry in the U.S. has a very different history. Although in the last half-century it has dramatically declined in both numbers and influence, with many of its temples being sold for other uses. In the first volume of a projected trilogy, *Freedom Just Around the Corner: A New American History, 1585-1828*, Pulitzer Prize–winning historian Walter A. McDougall of the University of Pennsylvania reminds us that Freemasonry was once very much like the establishment religion of the American establishment. It is among the many engaging stories in his fast-paced account of our national experience constructed around the theme of the American "hustler" (a word the author insists is not necessarily a pejorative). "Freemasonry," McDougall writes, "all but captured the Continental Army's officer corps thanks to the patronage of Washington, Greene, Knox, Sullivan, and other generals." And of course the Great Seal of the United States is straight out of Masonic lore. Between 1786 and 1819, ten of Virginia's thirteen governors and 50 percent of its assemblymen were Masons. Protestant clergy of a certain class rushed to join up, and over these decades the Masons established more organizations to help widows and orphans than did the churches. "What the fraternal order did was offer Americans in leadership and those aspiring to it a republicanism above faction, region, and sect, a civic religion enjoining unity and restraint so citizens might get on with the sacred task of completing that pyramid beneath the Eye [on the Great Seal] and before the eyes of the world." At the groundbreaking ceremony for the U.S. capitol, the Master from the Alexandria lodge solemnly walked at the rear (like the celebrant at Mass) of a procession of public officials, soldiers, and bedecked Freemasons. McDougall writes: "When the two columns arrived, they turned toward each other, forming a corridor through which strode the Master. His white apron and gloves in place, he lowered a silver plate into a niche in the foundation, eyed the plumb line to ensure the cornerstone was laid with precision, and strewed sacramental elements of corn, oil and wine. The assembly made an 'awful [awe-filled]' invocation to the Supreme Architect, the Masons 'chanted honors,' and the soldiers fired a salute. Finally, a short address declared the unity of Freemasonry with the republic as symbolized by the silver plate whose inscription read: 'in the thirteenth year of American independence . . . and the year of Masonry, 5793.' By the Christian calendar, the ceremony on Capitol Hill occurred September 18, 1793. The Master in apron was George Washington." That was a very long time ago. Masonry continued to be a force in American public life for another century and a half, but today's American listening to Europeans talk about the dangers of Freemasonry may be inclined to think the threat as mythological as the fantastical myths on which the movement was founded by the four London lodges in 1717. It is but another of innumerable differences that gave rise to the observation, "Only in America."

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■ Imagine a wealthy country that spends hundreds of millions of dollars setting up schools and publishing textbooks and other propaganda urging hatred of the United States and the destruction of the state of Israel. We might be inclined to view such a country as an enemy in the war on terrorism. The country in question is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Freedom House has just published an eighty-nine-page report, "Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Fill American Mosques." A year-long research project turned up hundreds of books, pamphlets, and other materials promoted in American mosques and reflecting the bloodcurdling views of the Wahhabi sect of Islam that is officially endorsed and funded by the Saudi government. In the late '70s, the Saudis made a bargain with the Wahhabi leadership that, if they overlooked the corruption of the Saudi government and concentrated their attacks on the U.S. and Israel, the Wahhabis would be favored in Saudi Arabia and have generous access to its oil wealth. The normally soft-spoken George Shultz, former U.S. secretary of state, calls it "a grotesque protection racket." Fifteen of the nineteen terrorists in the September 11 attacks were Saudis. Saudi-sponsored propaganda calls for unlimited *jihad* against the Crusaders (i.e. Christians) and Jews, and also against other Muslims who do not toe the Wahhabi line. Reading the report, one is struck by the detailed prescriptions (*fatwas*) laid down for Muslims living in America. They must never forget for a minute that they are living behind the lines in enemy territory; they must never greet the infidels or make any friendly gesture, unless the aim is to convert the infidels to Islam. Particular emphasis is placed on not recognizing the holy days or national observances of the infidels. In the Christmas season, for instance, even "Happy Holidays" is forbidden. Muslims who violate such rules are themselves infidels and permission is granted to "spill their blood and take their money." The Freedom House report notes that some Muslim religious leaders have been expelled from the country for their ties to terrorism, but many of the most influential mosques in New York, Los Angeles, Houston, and other major cities continue to press the Saudi-Wahhabi line of unremitting hatred for America and Americans. This, one might delicately observe, puts a severe crimp in hopes for the assimilation of several million Muslim immigrants. Freedom House acknowledges that the Saudis say they are "updating" some of the more vicious textbooks and other literature but notes that the people in charge of the updating are the same people who wrote and disseminated the offending material in the first place. Freedom House is understandably skeptical. It is only a very small consolation to know that Muslim immigrants—or at least those adhering to the Saudi-Wahhabi line—will not be contributing to the scourge of "Happy Holidays" during the Christmas season.

■ Identity politics, it seems, has now invaded the museum world. At the Smithsonian's new National Museum of the American Indian, the general public is permitted to view only some of the material in the collection. Other artifacts can be seen only by people from a specific tribe. Marian Kaminitz, head of conservation, says that native peoples should be the curators, "because they know the material best, as it is the material of their culture. We respect their concerns and interpret the material through what they see as appropriate rather than as a dominating voice from outside the culture." Indians may in some cases be the best authorities on Indian culture, although, as many scholars have pointed out, American Indian culture as currently admired is in large part the product of non-Indian mythmaking, not least of all by Hollywood. The more important point is that the very idea of the modern museum is founded on a distinctly Western belief that knowledge is universal and a distinctly Western eagerness to learn from other cultures. The Smithsonian is in the odd position—although by no means alone in the odd position—of undermining its own rationale for being. Perhaps the magnificent collections of medieval art in our great museums should be entrusted to the exclusive care and interpretation of devout Christians, or maybe just devout Catholics. Extend the logic to Egyptian, Chinese, and other collections. Or maybe all the stuff should be shipped back to their original owners, as the Greeks demand with respect to the Elgin marbles at the British Museum. Then the museums could all go out of business, leaving the future's understanding of the past in the hands of their ethnic-ideological custodians. Somebody at the Smithsonian needs to get a grip.

■ The mind of Hollywood, if one may be permitted the expression, wants to be scrupulously fair and balanced. Much was made of the fact that, when it came to the Academy Awards, Hollywood eschewed giving serious consideration to "controversial" films of both the left and the right, meaning Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* and Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. Mr. Moore's film, as he repeatedly and proudly declared, was an unabashed piece of partisan propaganda aimed at discrediting and defeating George W. Bush. As movie critic Michael Medved observes, it has the lasting artistic significance of a faded bumper sticker from a failed election cam-

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paign. *The Passion*, by way of contrast, is totally nonpolitical and will almost certainly be viewed as a classic, watched by appreciative audiences for many years into the future. Contrary to Hollywood bias, it is neither conservative nor right-wing within the meaning of our current political polarizations, having earned $370 million in domestic box office sales in 2004 by drawing huge crowds in states both red and blue. By rejecting both Moore and Gibson, the entertainment mandarins were able to pose as centrists, and were thus free to heap awards on films sympathetically depicting "noncontroversial" causes such as abortion (*Vera Drake*) and mercy killing (*Million Dollar Baby*, *The Sea Inside*).

■ The late Edward Said of Columbia University popularized and made academically dominant the notion of "Orientalism." In this view, Western colonialists fabricated an Eastern culture that suited their exploitative purposes. William Dalrymple reviews in the *Times Literary Supplement* a new book by Michael Fisher, a scholar of the East India Company, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain, 1600-1857*. Dalrymple writes: "Perhaps the most arresting notion contained in Fisher's book is the symmetry that it shows between Western accounts of the Orient and Eastern accounts of the Occident. Just as Westerners fantasized about a sensuous East, so Easterners clearly envisaged the West as a place of heightened and blatant sensuality; the easy availability of white women is something that nearly all male Indian authors remarked on, often with feigned shock. Equally, just as the eighteenth-century British sometimes enjoyed exotic Oriental confections in their clothes and buildings, so demonstrating the cosmopolitan nature of their tastes and outlook, so the popularity of the Feringhee style in courts such as Murshidabad, Kotah, or Lucknow reflected a taste for the exotic West. Contrary to the ideas of Edward Said, a taste for Oriental exotica—and indeed for Orientalism as a whole—can therefore be understood less as a colonial Western anomaly and more as one half of a natural human attraction to the strange, the foreign, and the unknown. Given the prominence of Said's ideas in all modern studies of colonialism, Michael Fisher's work supplies an intriguing and original element of balance." Those whom we find strange, fascinating, and perhaps threatening probably view us in the same way. "O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us. . . ." On the other hand, given our current circumstance in relation to radical Islam, it is necessary to balance the balance by observing that some strange and fascinating people really are threatening, and lethally so.

■ Everybody who has been involved in one way or another in arguments over abortion policy, and that must be just about everybody over the age of reason, can probably recall a moment or moments that decisively shaped their thinking on the matter. The following is from a collection of essays by Richard Selzer, *Moral Lessons: Notes on the Art of Surgery*: "In our city, garbage is collected early in the morning. Sometimes the bang of the cans and the grind of the trucks awaken us before our time. We are resentful, mutter into our pillows, then go back to sleep. On the morning of August 6, 1975, the people of 73rd Street near Woodside Avenue do just that. When at last they rise from their beds, dress, eat breakfast, and leave their houses for work, they have forgotten, if they had ever known, that the garbage truck had passed earlier that morning. The event has slipped into unmemory, like a dream. They close their doors and descend to the pavement. It is midsummer. You measure the climate, decide how you feel in relation to the heat and humidity. You walk toward the bus stop. Others, your neighbors, are waiting there. It is all so familiar. All at once you step on something soft. You feel it with your foot. Even through your shoe you have the sense of something unusual, something marked by a special 'give.' It is a foreignness upon the pavement. Instinct pulls your foot away in an awkward little movement. You look down, and you see . . . a tiny naked body, its arms and legs flung apart, its head thrown back, its mouth agape, its face serious. A bird, you think, fallen from its nest. But there is no nest here on 73rd Street, no bird so big. It is rubber, then. A model a . . . joke. Yes, that's it, a joke. And you bend to see. Because you must. And it is no joke. Such a gray softness can be but one thing. It is a baby, and dead. You cover your mouth, your eyes. You are fixed. Horror has found its chink and crawled in, and you will never be the same as you were. Years later you will step from a sidewalk to a lawn, and you will start at its softness, and think of that upon which you have just trod. Now you look about; another man has seen it too. 'My God,' he whispers. . . . There is a cry. 'Here's another!' and 'Another!' and 'Another.' . . . Later, at the police station, the investigation is brisk, conclusive. It is the hospital director speaking. 'Fetuses accidentally got mixed up with the hospital rubbish . . . were picked up at approximately 8:15 AM by a sanitation truck. Somehow, the plastic lab bag, labeled HAZARDOUS MATERIAL, fell off the back of the truck and broke open. No, it is not known how the fetuses got in the orange plastic bag labeled HAZARDOUS MATERIAL. It is a freak accident.' The hospital director wants you to know that it is not an everyday occurrence. Once in a lifetime, he says. But you

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have seen it, and what are his words to you now? He grows affable, familiar, tells you that, by mistake, the fetuses got mixed up with the other debris. (Yes, he says *other*, he says *debris*.) He has spent the entire day, he says, trying to figure out how it happened. He wants you to know that. Somehow it matters to him. He goes on: aborted fetuses that weigh one pound or less are incinerated. Those weighing over one pound are buried at the city cemetery. He says this. Now you see. It is orderly. It is sensible. The world is not mad. This is still a civilized society. . . . But just this once, you know it isn't. You saw, and you know."

■ It seems longer than that, but it was the fortieth anniversary of the *National Catholic Reporter* that brought 150 people together at Georgetown University for a celebration. The press release says that "the speeches and sentiments of the evening spoke of charging into the future." Chosen as keynoter was the venerable veteran of agitations beyond numbering, Benedictine Sister Joan Chittester. She exhorted, "*NCR*, stand up, speak out, and speak on. *NCR*, for the sake of the Galilean, for the sake of the next kid with a gleam in her eye." The Galilean in question, said an observer, is Our Lord. Attentive to *NCR*'s institutional interests, the event honored Bishop Raymond Boland of Kansas City, where the paper is published. He boldly asserted that, while he did not always agree with *NCR* on everything, he believes in a free press. The chief honoree as *NCR* charged into the future was Father Robert Drinan, S.J., who was warmly lauded for his half-century of courageous leadership. As a Massachusetts congressman from 1971 to 1981, Fr. Drinan was solidly pro-abortion and, probably more than any other single person, influenced Catholic politicians to claim that support for *Roe v. Wade* is consistent with the Church's teaching. A columnist for *NCR*, Fr. Drinan more recently gained public attention by his vigorous opposition to a ban on partial birth abortion, also known as live birth abortion. In response to the honor, Fr. Drinan said of the Church, "This is the living voice of Christ." He then added, "We love the invisible Church. We sometimes criticize the visible Church." Before the Georgetown dinner, the report adds, an editor "demonstrated folding origami peace cranes." Seemliness suggests that one try to muster congratulations as *NCR* goes charging back into the future.

■ There is the crass materialism that holds that consciousness is but the static emanating from the three pounds of meat that is the brain, and then there is the docetism that holds that consciousness is the essential self to which a body is attached. *At the Interface: Theology and Virtual Reality* by Mary Timothy Prokes addresses these fascinating differences in a book that reviewer William E. May thinks brilliant. Sister Mary Timothy writes that many think of the body as "the original prosthesis that we all learn to manipulate." That is very nicely put. This also gives me occasion to note that William E. May does not appreciate being confused with William F. May. They are both Christian ethicists. The former teaches at the John Paul II Institute in Washington, D.C., and the latter at Southern Methodist University. William E. says the views of William F. are frequently attributed to him, which can be bothersome. I don't know whether William F. has the same problem. I count them both as friends and recommend the obvious solution that they write under their full names. It has for me been the answer to no end of confusions with the other Richard Neuhauses. Of course, one has to start early.

■ The reinvention of Christianity, the most traditional of American contributions to religious history, proceeds apace. *Publisher's Weekly* is excited. An article, "Pomos Toward Paradise," breathlessly reports the pomos (postmoderns) of the "emerging church" who are rapidly moving toward the paradise of big commercial success, with many of them having arrived. Brian McLaren's *A New Kind of Christian* is a tremendous hit. McLaren "calls the emerging church a 'conversation' rather than a movement." It appears that even "movement" suggests too much of an institutional commitment for "emergents" who want to float unencumbered in their spiritual fancies. Says McLaren, "They're asking questions about what it means to be a Christian in a postmodern, postcolonial world." Postcolonial? One waits in vain for the postinanity era in the spiritual hustling of what *PW* calls the world of "viral networking." (Viral as in virus, one assumes.) A successful marketer explains, "A lot of people who fit into the postmodern category don't want to be identified as Christian." Christ is so much easier to take without the riffraff he has attracted over the centuries. The Relevant Media Group is near the top of the market with a "hip, twenty-something demographic that is the primary core of postmodern thinking." For Relevant, we are told, "the 'real world' is largely an urban one." "We want to be part of our readers' world," says a spokesman, so the company is moving from an affluent suburb to a site closer to the center of Orlando, Florida. You can hardly get more urban than that. Postmodern, postcolonial, emerging, viral networking—it's mostly the hype and chatter of religious pandering to a neophiliac culture. In addition

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to cashing in on the newest new thing, I expect most of these authors and perhaps even some of the publishers think they are winning souls for Christ. *Christianity Today*, the mainline evangelical magazine, pays a lot of attention and is concerned about the theological vacuity and doctrinal deviations of the industry, as well it should be. But the stuff sells, as witness *PW*'s list of the top-forty religion bestsellers in the same issue, a list which (except for one book by the estimable C. S. Lewis) runs the gamut from lower to higher kitsch. Of course, such an observation smacks of elitism, as in having a taste for excellence. The higher elitism, however, is not scornful toward the inevitability of the popular always being popular, as in vulgar, and holds on to the hope that those who sell the fake satisfactions of being superior to Christianity as it has been believed and lived through time will, however inadvertently, lead some people to a commitment to Christ, including his mostly quite ordinary friends who are the Church. Seeing through the preening self-importance of "seeker," "emergent," "pomo," and whatever is next month's hot spiritual pretension, they might even find the courage to call themselves Christians.

■ Jan Cardinal Schotte of Belgium has died at age seventy-six. A learned and affable man, he was for years secretary general of the Synod of Bishops. The Pope appointed me as one of the few non-episcopal delegates to the 1997 Synod on the Americas, after which I wrote a little book, *Appointment in Rome*, which contained some measured criticism of the way these synods are organized. I received a stiff letter from Cardinal Schotte who complained that the book had taken liberties with the secrecy rule applying to such synods. As it happened, a few days earlier I had received a very warm letter from the Pope who had just read the book. He wrote, "I am confident that your keen insights and lively exposition will help many readers gain a better understanding of the great cooperative effort of the Bishops and others like yourself who have subjected the Synod theme to extensive reflection and discussion." I was in the happy position of responding to Cardinal Schotte's complaint by including a copy of the Pope's letter and tweaking him, deferentially of course, with the suggestion that he might be interested in another view of my book. I did not hear back from Cardinal Schotte but I expect he took it in good spirits. Among his many Christian virtues, he enjoyed a good cigar. Jan Cardinal Schotte. *Requiescat in pace.*

■ The enemy of my enemy. . . . That old maxim has something to do with it, but a deeper convergence is at work as some Europeans, ever so slowly, begin to awake to what they are doing to themselves by their relentless rejection of Christianity as integral to the history and future of Europe. These questions came to a head last fall when Rocco Buttiglione, Italy's representative to the EU, was rejected as its commissioner for justice. Buttiglione is a cherished friend. He was key to the founding of the Tertio Millennio seminar on Catholic social doctrine which we started fourteen years ago in Lichtenstein and then, at the suggestion of the Pope, moved to Krakow, Poland. Buttiglione's offense in the eyes of the EU is that he is a Catholic who agrees with the Church on disputed questions such as men having sex with men. No matter that at his hearings he made a clear distinction between what is immoral and what should be criminal; the dogma of the EU allows for no deviation, even privately, from the regnant secularism. Among those who have been roused to challenge this determinedly godless regime is none other than the very influential German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who describes himself as a "methodological atheist." Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has been invoking Habermas, who recently published "A Time of Transition," which argues that Christianity, and Christianity alone, is the ultimate foundation of liberty, conscience, human rights, and democracy. "To this day," he writes, "we have no other options. We continue to nourish ourselves from this source. Everything else is postmodern chatter." On the relationship between theology and philosophy, he writes (keep in mind that he is a *German* philosopher): "I don't resent it at all when I am accused of having inherited theological concepts. I am convinced that religious discourse contains within itself potentialities that have not yet been sufficiently explored by philosophy, insofar as they have not yet been translated into the language of public reason, which is presumed to be able to persuade anyone. Naturally, I am not talking about the neopagan project of those who want to 'build upon mythology.' Today, in the field of antirational postmodern criticism, these neopagan conceptual figures are back in fashion: a broad anti-Platonism carelessly spread by fashions inspired by the late Heidegger and late Wittgenstein, in the sense of a definitive repudiation of the universalism that characterizes the premises of unconditional truth. I rebel against this regressive tendency of post-metaphysical thought." Although the EU and its constitution affirm Athens to the exclusion of Jerusalem and Rome, Habermas says this is not possible: "In the dialogical dispute among competing religious visions there is a need for that 'culture of recognition' which draws its principles from the secularized world of the universalism of reason and law. In this matter, it is thus the philosophical spirit which pro-

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vides the concepts instrumental in the political clarification of theology. But the political philosophy capable of making this contribution bears the stamp of the idea of the Covenant no less than that of the Polis. Therefore this philosophy also hearkens back to a biblical heritage." Habermas is among the "atheists for Christianity" who insist that the Church not compromise its integrity. He writes, "In the general leveling of society by the media everything seems to lose seriousness, even institutionalized Christianity. But theology would lose its identity if it sought to uncouple itself from the dogmatic nucleus of religion, and thus from the religious language in which the community's practices of prayer, confession, and faith are made concrete." Of course there are, as there have always been, those who criticize "devout atheists" who are supportive of Christianity, and also Christians who welcome the support. The Catholic sensibility, however, going back to the patristic era and its happy use of "the spoils of Egypt," is inclined to embracing truth wherever it is found. This is very much the message of John Paul II's 1998 encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Jürgen Habermas may seem to be improbable allies. But believing, as Habermas does, that what may not be true is nonetheless socially useful to the point of being indispensable is not strategically incompatible with believing, as Ratzinger does, that what is true is also socially useful and indeed indispensable. And working together keeps open the possibility that people such as Habermas will come to the discovery that, ultimately, utility and truth are one.

■ Many years ago, the Order of the Eagles in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, honored those who had saved the city from flooding by erecting a monument with the Ten Commandments in a public park. In due course, the champions of the naked public square brought suit and, in response, the city sold that part of the park, with the monument, back to the Eagles. That was, predictably, challenged by another suit. The Seventh Circuit ruled that, even if the installation of the original monument violated the Constitution, the sale of the land remedied any possible problem. So maybe the solution to the putative constitutional difficulty of religious symbols on government properties is to sell, and thus privatize, them. Of course that probably wouldn't work in the case of the hundreds of thousands of crosses and stars of David in military cemeteries.

■ On the right hand side of the car: "Objects in the mirror are closer than they appear." That has always struck me as philosophically haunting. Evelyn Waugh's *Love Among the Ruins* is, he says, a "romance of the near future." His hero, Miles Plastic, is pleased to be assigned to socialist Britain's only thriving industry: euthanasia. His supervisor, Dr. Beamish, is a man "now much embittered, like many of his contemporaries, by the fulfillment of his early hopes." In a moment of candor, Beamish vents his exasperation to Plastic: "Damned sentimentalists. My father and mother hanged themselves in their own backyard with their own clothesline. Now no one will lift a finger to help himself. There's something wrong in the system, Plastic. There are still rivers to drown in, trains—every now and then—to put your head under; gas-fires in some of the huts. The country is full of the natural resources of death, but everybody has to come to us." That was written a long time ago—1953 to be precise—and the story was taken to be satire. But now this report from the Netherlands: "Doctors can help patients who ask for help to die even though they may not be ill but are 'suffering through living,' concludes a three-year inquiry commissioned by the Royal Dutch Medical Association. The report argues that no reason can be given to exclude situations of such suffering from a doctor's area of competence. . . . The new report does not rule on how doctors should respond if a patient without a classifiable condition should approach them for help but says that doctors believe that some cases of 'suffering through living' could be judged 'unbearable and hopeless' and therefore fall within the boundaries of the existing euthanasia law." Waugh expected socialist Britain to be in the vanguard of the death industry. He wrote, "Foreigners came in such numbers to take advantage of the service that immigration authorities now turned back the bearers of single tickets." As it turns out, the lead has been taken by what Mark Steyn calls Eurotopia, the death-'n'-sex boutique states of Holland and Switzerland. The London *Daily Telegraph* reports that "the Swiss are planning to crack down on 'suicide tourists,' including hundreds of Britons, who want to take their lives at a Zurich euthanasia clinic." The report says, "Swiss officials are alarmed that most foreign patients spend only twenty-four hours in the country, meaning that there is little time for their cases to be checked fully." Complains Zurich's chief prosecutor, "We know nothing about them and we can't say if it was a long-term desire to end their lives." New rules will have staff "specially trained in their trade" and certified as "suicide assistants." Deborah Annets, chief executive of Britain's Voluntary Euthanasia Society, agrees that it is imperative that suicide "should be properly regulated." After all, we're dealing with civilized societies here, and it seems the decent thing to get to know something about the people you are going to kill. "Objects in the mirror. . . ."

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■ Father Louis Bouyer has died at age ninety-one. Born a Swiss Lutheran, Bouyer became a Catholic as a young man. His scholarship and publications ranged widely over the apostolic, patristic, and Reformation periods. His constant interests were liturgy, spirituality, and Christian unity. In my Lutheran seminary years, Bouyer's *Liturgical Piety* made a great impression, as did *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*. The latter argues that philosophical nominalism was at the heart of what was great, and what went wrong, in the Reformation tradition. Ignatius Press has just reissued his little book, *The Word, Church, and Sacraments: In Protestantism and Catholicism*. I spoke with Fr. Bouyer only once and he had generous things to say about this journal and my efforts. Suddenly I was young again, like a fresh apprentice commended by a legendary master. Father Louis Bouyer. May he be welcomed to the celestial liturgy that he so long anticipated, and taught others to anticipate, from afar.

■ Out in Okemos, Michigan, there is a Weyco company that is firing smokers and those who refuse to take a test to see if they're smoking, on the job or off. The company doesn't want to pay medical costs presumably increased by smoking. Workers were worried about what other impermissible acts or conditions might get them dismissed. Weyco issued a statement: "Anyone concerned about limiting employers' rights to specify terms of employment should know that federal law protects people with conditions like obesity, alcoholism, and AIDS." A cigar is nothing like obesity, alcoholism, or AIDS, but maybe it's time for some of us smokers to get ourselves federally registered and protected. Along with parachute jumpers and guys over fifty who try to play basketball with the youngsters. "Weyco Warning: taking risks that are not officially registered as disabilities may be dangerous to your employment."

■ The "one little word" discussed in the January issue shows signs of expanding, as expected, into a flood of words as bolder souls among the Democrats urge a reconsideration of that party's don't-give-an-inch commitment to *Roe v. Wade*. The one little word of our earlier discussion was the word "but" in a *New York Times* editorial swearing everlasting allegiance to reproductive rights *but* acknowledging that political realities may require a measure of accommodation. Benjamin Wittes is an editorial writer at the *Washington Post* and takes his turn at urging reconsideration in a long interview in the *Atlantic Monthly*. "I generally favor permissive abortion laws. And despite my lack of enthusiasm for *Roe*, I wouldn't favor overturning the decision as a jurisprudential matter," he says. But "the liberal commitment to *Roe* has been deeply unhealthy—for American democracy, for liberalism, and even for the cause of abortion rights itself. All would benefit if abortion rights proponents were forced to make their arguments in the policy arena (rather than during Supreme Court nomination hearings), and if prolifers were actually accountable to the electorate for their deeply unpopular policy prescriptions." While he does not use the phrase "judicial usurpation," Wittes underscores that the abortion license is not grounded in the Constitution (despite much academic contention to the contrary), was imposed by the judiciary, and is popularly resented for, among other reasons, its continuing offense against the institutions and habits of democratic decision-making. "So, although *Roe* created the right to choose, that right exists under perpetual threat of obliteration, and depends for its vitality on the composition of the Supreme Court at any given moment." "In short, *Roe* puts liberals in the position of defending a lousy opinion that disenfranchised millions of conservatives on an issue about which they care deeply while freeing those conservatives from any obligation to articulate a responsible policy that might command majority support." Wittes' argument uncritically assumes that the great majority of Americans are, when it comes down to it, in favor of preserving the abortion license, with some modest restrictions. I think he is wrong about that, but we will not know until the question is, in the several states, returned to the electoral and legislative arena, and that probably will not happen until *Roe* is out of the way. In Wittes' view, as a result of a legislative resolution, "the right to abortion would most likely enjoy a measure of security it does not now have." He has a nicely framed response to the objection that he is submitting a fundamental right to the mercy of the majority: "The right to abortion remains a highly debatable proposition, both jurisprudentially and morally. The mere fact that liberals have to devote so much political energy to pretending that the right exists beyond democratic debate proves that it doesn't." Yes, but how would he view the matter if he were a woman? Answer: "I have no idea what losing my Y chromosome would do to my attitude toward this subject, but the costs of defending *Roe* have grown too high, and I'm just not willing to pay them anymore." He might have mentioned that, according to recent surveys, the majority of women now identify themselves as pro-life. We are still in the early stages of the Democrats' reconsideration of the party's unqualified commitment to the unlimited abortion license. I

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expect there will be many more public adumbrations on that editorial "but" of the *Times*. It is possible that at some point we will arrive at a more or less stable political equilibrium on this question of greatest moment in our public life. Whether that political resolution will be closer to the unqualified legal protection of the unborn or to the unqualified right to kill nobody can know. We will not find out until *Roe* is overturned or effectively shunted aside. That people such as Benjamin Wittes are urging Democrats to abandon *Roe* and take their pro-abortion argument to the people is, all in all, a promising development.

■ Some meetings of ROFTERS (Readers of FIRST THINGS) gather in the parish hall, others in homes over a potluck dinner, yet others at restaurants, and at least one at the local library. Groups usually meet once a month and take up, in various ways, what is in the current issue. Each group is independent and determines what structure, or absence of structure, works best. To find a ROFTERS group near you, check out the website, *www.firstthings.com*. If you are interested in launching a group, write Erik Ross at *er@firstthings.com*.

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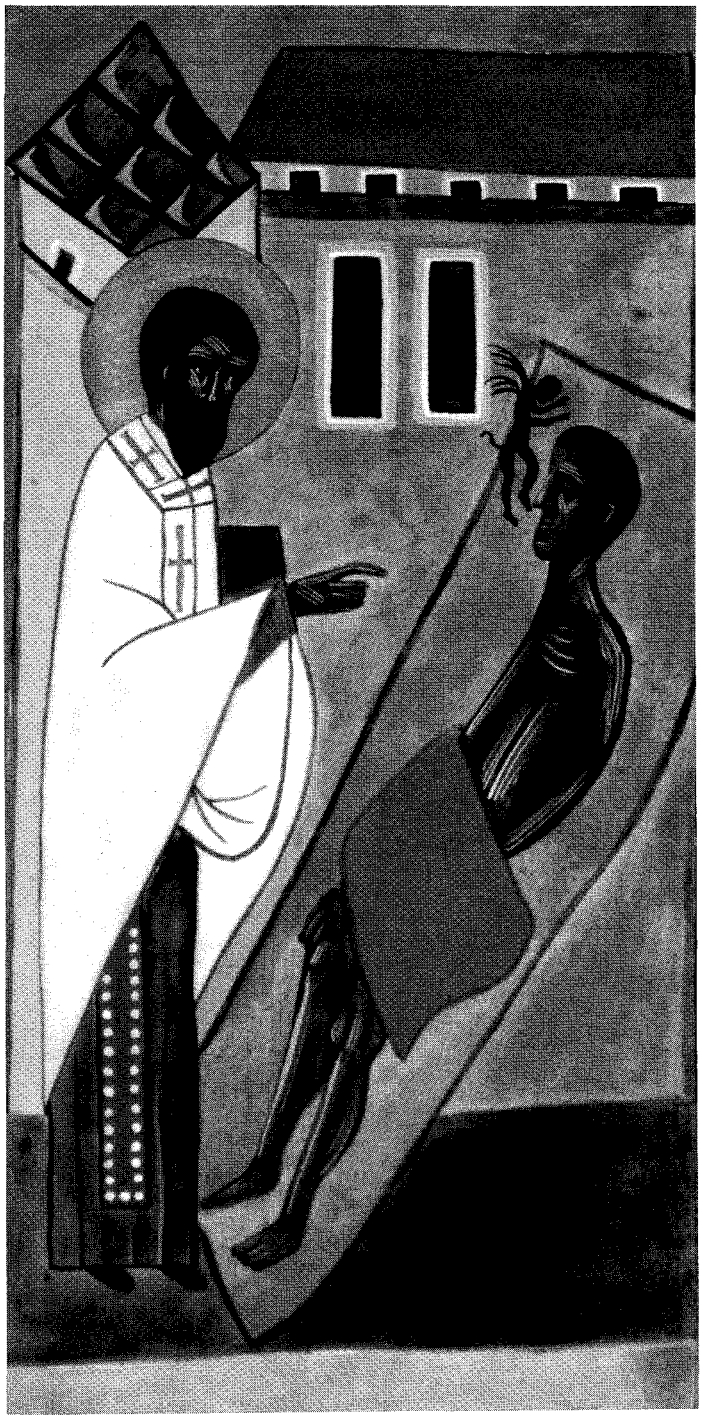

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